



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



FRENCH FICTION
OF TO-DAY.

BY
MADAME VAN DE VELDE.

KE 834

~~ZYH~~
SHELF ~~V 2.6~~

ACCESSIONS 25,501

THE BOSTON-LIBRARY SOCIETY.

ORGANIZED 1792. INCORPORATED 1794.

~~18, BOYLSTON PLACE,~~
114, NEWBURY STREET,

Added Oct. 19, 1897

To be returned in five weeks. A fine of one cent
will be incurred for each day this volume is detained
beyond that time.

CANCELLED

1940

334 OCT 22 OCT 30
270 NOV 20 NOV 27

116 JAN 21 JAN 25
629 MAR 14 MAR 21
352 APR 11 APR 11

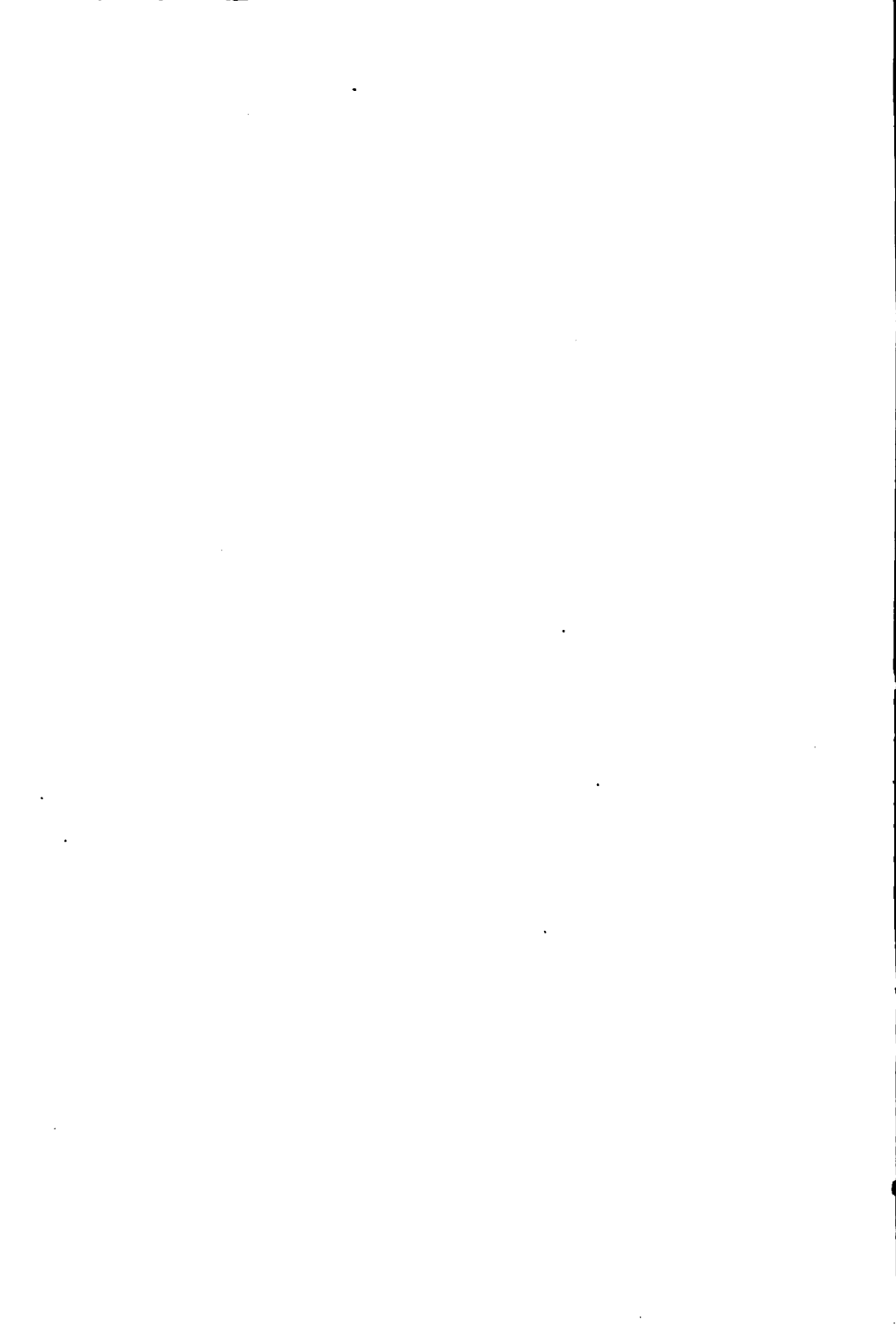
580 JUN 17 JUN 24

496 JUL 17 JUL 24



FRENCH FICTION OF TO-DAY

VOL. I.



THE
BOSTON LIBRARY
SOCIETY



347
Y9A98L-MOT808
YT31302

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

SECRET

100

2. ...

7-2004

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

GUY DE M.



FRENCH FICTION

OF

TO-DAY

BY

MADAME M. S. VAN DE VELDE

AUTHOR OF

"RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF COURTS AND SOCIETY,"

"COSMOPOLITAN RECOLLECTIONS," "DOCTOR

GREYSTONE," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

WITH TWELVE PORTRAITS
BOSTON LIBRARY

VOL. 1.

SOCIETY

London

TRISCHLER AND COMPANY

18 NEW BRIDGE STREET, E.C.

1891

[All rights reserved]

KE 834



75
per vol

3HT
Y8A9BL-MOT208
YT3D02

TO THE READER.



FOR many years eminent men of letters in France have exhaustively reviewed contemporary English and American fiction in such first-class magazines as the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, *La Nouvelle Revue*, and others equally well known. Copious extracts, sometimes complete translations, have made people across the Channel familiar with works of E. Yates, Wilkie Collins, G. Eliot, Julia Kavanagh, T. Hardy, Bret Harte, G. Meredith, Whyte-Melville, Henry James, William Black, Rhoda Broughton, T. B. Aldrich, and a host of others. Their qualities, tendencies, peculiarities, individualities of style, conception, and construction, have been accurately studied and expounded with equal knowledge of the

subject and sympathy for the author, by literary critics as remarkable as F. Brunetière, E. D. Forgues, Th. Bentzon, L. Boucher, E. Montegut, and Variguy, who are at the very head of their profession.

It cannot be my ambition, and it must not be my hope, to emulate them in proficiency or influence, but it has been my earnest desire to attempt for the French novelists of to-day what has been done for their English contemporaries: to popularise their books, and, in some instances, their persons and mode of life, with the British public, and to allow them to speak for themselves when their words depict more graphically than mere reviewing can convey.

Necessarily, between the time of sending these sheets to the press and the date of their publication, the incessant literary onward movement has wrought some changes and given birth to new creations of the romancer's imagination, while some distinguished writers have ceased for ever from

RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS OF COURTS AND SOCIETY.

BY "A COSMOPOLITAN."

ART LITERATURE.

"It is not to be wondered that the work has required a second edition. The author has evidently been in possession of a fund of reminiscences from which to draw his or her material for the compilation of what is certainly a most readable book."

GLOBE.

"Full of anecdote about well-known people and others, and, if authentic in its information, not without historical and biographical value."

QUEEN.

"The writer has apparently an intimate knowledge of the proceedings of some of the Continental Courts . . . if it does not abound in scandal, it is nevertheless interesting, with here and there a streak of personal observation as to particular incidents which may not have been recorded elsewhere."

ACADEMY.

"A most entertaining book. . . . Although the author has a keen relish for good stories, he has not forgotten his good-nature; . . . though vastly entertaining, contains more information than is to be met in many works of more pretension."

DAILY NEWS.

"There is a good deal of pleasure in a volume of reminiscences in which the author never mentions himself, nor his cousins, nor his aunts. . . . The book is diverting: the *Cosmopolitan* 'leads' from a strong suit of Court cards."

NEW YORK SUN.

"One effect of reading a chapter of this book is like listening to the conversation of a highly accomplished and intelligent woman, whose opportunities of association with distinguished persons have been exceptional; the author is as familiar with the society of Berlin, Turin, and Brussels, as with that of Paris and Madrid. . . . We should fail in our duty to our readers if we did not point out the pleasure and profit derivable from these Recollections."

MELBOURNE ARGUS.

"A book full of interest. . . . *Cosmopolitan* has evidently seen many countries and many men of them; . . . his pictures have the look of being drawn from life."

LITERARY WORLD.

"A *Cosmopolitan* presents no credentials other than those which are contained in the names of his well-known publishers; but if he is trustworthy, he is not only attractive but instructive."

TRUTH.

"Bewildering in its incoherence, it is entertaining and exceedingly interesting."

PICCADILLY.

"The book of the season."

COSMOPOLITAN RECOLLECTIONS.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "RANDOM RECOLLECTIONS."

WARD AND DOWNEY.

DAILY NEWS.

"The writer is a British Comte Vassili, and the book is the legend of every European Court to date. The author may say with Montaigne, "*Ceci est un livre de bonne foy.*"

PALL MALL GAZETTE.

"Full of good stories and interesting facts, which, couched in polite and pleasant language, lose much of their malice."

ST. JAMES'S GAZETTE.

"A cleverly written book, certain of attracting wide attention. . . . Full of good stories and interesting gossip, without introducing a single unkind reflection or ungenerous allusion."

PICTORIAL WORLD.

"We have not come across two volumes which contain more information. . . . Useful to the journalist and to the ordinary reader."

PICCADILLY.

"Exceedingly interesting and new; . . . as attractive as anything which the befuddled Count Vassili wrote, *minus* his vulgarity and bitterness."

SCOTSMAN.

"The author has somehow acquired the power of lifting the roofs of royal palaces, and his readers get full advantage of his knowledge; . . . as valuable as a guide to the secret springs of State affairs as it is entertaining as a chronicle of the scandal and gossip of Courts."

ACADEMY.

"So thorough and comprehensive that even the dogs are not forgotten; . . . the author never mars his stories by ill-nature; . . . never dull, always good-natured, and generally well-informed."

SPECTATOR.

"Very rich in gossip material . . . the present gleaning has not been made from a bare field. *Cosmopolitan Recollections* compare very favourably with many works of the class to which they belong; they contain very little scandal and are absolutely devoid of malice; . . . the style is vivacious, very bright and entertaining."

VANITY FAIR.

"Decidedly a book to read."

their labours ; it may be also that the same interval has afforded opportunities for others to tread the same ground I have covered in the following pages, and maybe, perhaps, they have reached the goal before me. For all inevitable omissions, apparent oversights and unforeseen coincidences, excuses and indulgence are solicited by

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS OF VOL. I.



I.

INTRODUCTION.

General remarks on fiction within the last fifteen years—Novels constitute a social history—Fashions in plots and style—Erroneous judgments on French morals founded on French novels—*Home* and *Le Foyer*—Foul literature—Realism and Naturalism—The critics misunderstood—Historical novels—Novels of adventure—Psychological novels—The importance of women—The part they play in modern fiction . . . pp. 1-39

II.

PAUL BOURGET.

His life and habits—His system—An author of analysis—Eventually a painter of women—*Le Disciple*—His heroines—His special sphere—*André Cornelis*—*Crimes d'Amour*—*Mensonges*—A good book and a bad play—His work in the last decade

pp. 40-64

III.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

Boule de Suif—Analogy with Bret Harte—Fifteen volumes of short stories—His style and variety—Five novels—His views on literature—His four principles—*Fort comme la Mort*—*Sur l'Eau*—Maupassant's way of living pp. 65-84

IV.

Henri Lavedan, *Un jeune*—His birthplace—*Mamzelle Vertu*—The end of *Mie de Pain*—Short stories—*Lydie*—*Sire*—The funeral march of Royalty—*Les Inconsolables*—Mancheecourt in *La Vie Parisienne*—His first play—Catulle Mendès, an erotic writer, neither "romantic" nor naturalist—His marvellous style—His plays—His best stories—His book on Wagner—His duels
pp. 85-113

V.

Georges Ohnet—What the critics object to and the reader likes—His recipe for novels—He begins as a dramatist—*Le Maître de Forge* refused unanimously—Its ultimate success—Ohnet's life—His character—*Serge Panine*—*Le Docteur Rameau*—His popularity—Hector Malot—Accepted in England—Taine praises his first book—How *Sans Famille* was written—His retreat at Fontenay-aux-Bois—*Madame Obernin*—*Conscience*—*Mondaine*—*Vices Français*—English Portraits—Zola's judgment on Malot
pp. 114-153

VI.

Victor Cherbuliez—His school—His novitiate in Geneva—The ruling influences on his talent—A novel of mystery—*Le Roman d'une Honnête Femme*, &c. &c.—*Ladislav Boleki*—*Samuel Brühl et Compagnie*—Octave Feuillet—His detractors—His position at the Court of Napoleon III.—*M. de Camors*—The death of his son—*Honneur d'Artiste*, his last book—His death, December 1890

pp. 154-199

VII.

Alphonse Daudet—His abodes—*L'Immortel*—The French Academy—His high position in literature—Parallel between Sidonie Chébe and Madame Bovary—*Jack*—*Le Nabab*—*Les Rois en Exil*

pp. 200-240

PORTRAITS OF FRENCH AUTHORS

Referred to in this Volume.



- ✓ GUY DE MAUPASSANT.
- ✓ HENRI LAVEDAN.
- ✓ GEORGES OHNET.
- ✓ VICTOR CHERBULIEZ.
- ✓ OCTAVE FEUILLET.
- ✓ ALPHONSE DAUDET.

FRENCH FICTION OF TO-DAY.

INTRODUCTION.

General remarks on fiction within the last fifteen years—
Novels constitute a social history—Fashions in plots and
style—Erroneous judgments on French morals founded on
French novels—Home and *Le Foyer*—Foul literature—
Realism and Naturalism—The critics misunderstood—
Historical novels—Novels of adventure—Psychological
novels—The importance of women—The part they play
in modern fiction.

“*Il n’y a plus de Pyrénées !*” What was true
in politics is equally true now in literature.
Frontiers no longer exist between the talent and
genius of one nationality and that of another ;
they flow free and unchecked into distant chan-
nels, which they fertilise ; there are no longer
prohibitive barriers of protection to overthrow ;
insulation in Art is a thing of the past. The

educated of all nations can roam at will in the literary fields of every other land, and drink at the fount of foreign inspiration, armed either with their own acquired knowledge of the stranger's tongue, or equipped vicariously by the valiant, but too frequently unappreciated translator, who has placed within their reach what would otherwise have remained a dead letter. The thoughts, labours, researches, and expressions of writers in all languages are brought to-day within the universal ken; the monopoly of intellect is abolished. Nevertheless, in those rich pastures and abundant springs there still remain ungarnered harvests, ungathered fruits and blossoms, and untasted waters, for while certain privileged names ring out afar with a clarion sound, popularity, which is ever fickle and erratic, often condemns others—not the least deserving, perhaps—to inglorious obscurity, or at best their voices have but a faint echo on distant shores. In France as in Germany, in Italy as in Spain, in Russia as in Poland, a group of authors,

always the same, commands the attention of the general public to the detriment and often the exclusion of their contemporaries and fellow-workers, whose light is extinguished in the refulgence of the larger constellations. The time may never come when some lucky accident or the tardy, remorseful justice of the world lifts them suddenly to the position which was their rightful due; many never enter living into their immortality, but see the laurels of fame encircling every brow but their own. Others are recognised in their country alone; an unexplained fatality preventing their names from being proclaimed beyond the narrower home circle; these are so numerous that it is not without interest to know how they are judged by their compatriots, what claims they have to a less local fame, and what influence they in common with their more fortunate rivals have exercised on the literature of their time. A bird's-eye view over the whole of thinking and writing Europe would be too comprehensive to be accurate; it is there-

fore merely the aim of this study to examine the merits and qualities of French novelists, giving the preference to those with whom the English public is least familiar, although it is impossible not to allude to the universally acknowledged masters of French fiction, were it only in their relations to their disciples, and for the mark they have left on their epoch.

Fiction and romance to many appear simply the work of imagination and fancy, the lighter creations of the brain, calculated to amuse, to rest the mind wearied by deeper and graver thoughts ; the stern moralist and religious ascete condemn novels as frivolous always, often dangerous, and sometimes pernicious, forgetting that under their apparent frivolity and superficiality they exercise functions of undoubted utility. But fiction, which is a modern outcome of civilisation, has since its appearance on the world's stage constituted a social history ; it is the unbiassed witness, the unconscious record of the tastes, follies,

fashions, vanities, errors, passions, and vices of an age, exaggerated perhaps, but nevertheless true, and bearing the indelible impress of the moral, social, and philosophical tendencies of the time in which they were written. The yellowing pages of some long-forgotten novel will reveal as many past secrets and reopen as many cancelled episodes as the annals of history or the registers of the *Police de Sureté*; and they will likewise bear testimony to the radical changes that by slow and almost imperceptible degrees have made the style of to-day so different from what it was a hundred years ago. The older books were correctly, grammatically, elegantly written; French authors of every period knowing what qualities are essentially required by their compatriots; those of to-day are equally correct, grammatical and elegant, yet the divergence is so great between the former and the latter that they almost seem to be written in another tongue.

The men and women who delighted in the long polished phrases, the florid hyperbole, the

dexterously involved sentences, the excessive, graceful compliments, have disappeared, and with them the utterances that seemed so natural on their lips; the recondite epigram and delicate witticisms vanished with the *talons rouges*, the powder and the patches; lengthy dissertations and "precious" conversations are as obsolete as the gatherings of the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the sentimentalism of the *Voyage au Pays de Tendre* has died out with Mademoiselle de Scudery and her admirers. Realism with its brusquerie, violence, and coarseness has dispersed the last clouds of Bergamotte and Maréchale powder that still lingered on the shabby coats of the philosophers of Fernex and Geneva, and the breathless pace of the present generation is typified in the hurried, excited style of to-day. It is short, terse, and yet excessive; bizarre and extravagant; strong, with the headlong force of brutality, coruscated with a wit that seeks above all to be strange, pregnant with the feverish unrest of the reading generation of to-day;

brilliant, dazzling, made unreal by the exaggerated preoccupation of realism, extraordinarily talented, immensely clever, touching all subjects, probing every wound, striking every chord, vibrating, fascinating, enervating and—unconvincing.

Our descendants will be able by perusing Zola, Delpit, Daudet, Maupassant, Catulle Mendès, and their contemporaries, to reconstruct our epoch, to form a just idea of our generation; and if they care to look back into a past already dim to them, to conjure up the men and women of the latter part of the nineteenth century with their affectation of cynicism, their eternal *ennui* and restlessness, their unwholesome yearning for new sensations, their disregard of opinion, their contempt for what they call *vieux jeu*, their carelessness of their own dignity, their lack of higher aims, their unslaked thirst for wealth, and their supine contentment in the baser enjoyments that unlimited fortune alone can give, summed up in the last slang word, *fin de siècle*. They will see also that Paris had the monopoly

of such a society, and that in the provinces, unspoilt by centralisation, noble and austere virtues still resided, true patriotism and devotion, high integrity and brave endurance, and that for all the vices and follies of a caste and class the backbone of France was just as sound.

The living reader who turns over the leaves of *Germinal*, *Le Fils de Coralie*, *Boule de Suif*, *Sappho*, *Jupe Courte*, or any of the long list of novels published in France within the last twenty years, cannot fail, even if he is too frequently compelled to censure the prevailing tendency of contemporary fiction, to acknowledge that perhaps at no time has there been in literature so lavish an expenditure of talent; that a singular purity of form almost universally clothes the coarseness of the subject, and that the immaculate perfection of the style covers the weakness and vice of the conception. Few of the modern novelists are deficient in these qualities; even by the side of the veteran authors who have immortalised this literary epoch, a pleiad of younger

ones have trodden the same paths. *Les Jeunes* have distinguished themselves by dazzling powers of imagination, rare fecundity, superior workmanship, and a dexterity of manipulation which has extracted from the rich, supple, and prolific French language hitherto unsuspected treasures.

The judgment passed by England on France is founded on its novels, and naturally enough an indictment based on such grounds is damning. French novelists consider that the public must look after its own morals and decide what it chooses to read or left unread; they do not pretend to attune themselves to the standard of convents, schools, young girls, or any particular class, and absolve themselves from any reproach on the score of wounding susceptibilities or startling prejudice. Such as they have conceived it the book exists, is presented to the public, to be opened or left uncut, according to individual arbitrage. They habitually confine themselves to the *Roman de mœurs*, and are inspired by actualities. If a *grande dame* is the

heroine of a whispered scandal, thirty stories appear in which the incident is developed, exaggerated, surrounded by sensational crimes, and most commonly mixed up with the intervention of the police. "Well-informed" readers, believing themselves on the scent of a *roman à clef*, forthwith circulate the more or less authentic names of the originals supposed to have sat for the distorted portraits, and the blindly ignorant public accepts the explanation and piously popularises it. On the French side of the Channel the characters in *Vices Français* were acknowledged to be well-known English personalities.

As soon as hypnotism became the subject of scientific experiments and learned controversies, as well as the favourite pastime of the unoccupied, the novelist proceeded to make magnetic power the motor and factor of his plots, with less injury to morals perhaps, but equal subserviency to the question of the day. When divorce was made legal, this easy solution of difficult situations was eagerly accepted as the *Deus ex machina* of

fiction, the facile whitewashing of soiled virtue. As a direct consequence, the foreigner who considers this literature as the mirror of French society, conceived the notion that all high-bred Parisian women had guilty intrigues and shattered the Commandments to atoms; that *petites crevés* gifted with abnormal magnetic power used it solely to lead their discarded mistresses to commit murder; that divorce was the inevitable sequel of marriage; that misconduct had received the sanction of the law, and that French society was hopelessly debased. Did not the novels prove it?

These same foreigners would with difficulty be persuaded that as a matter of fact grave scandals rarely occur, that hypnotism is fast becoming a medical question only, and that divorces are the exception, not the rule. If it is true that within the last few years the courts have granted several thousand divorces, it must not be forgotten that there were large arrears of judicial separations to make final, but that the old stock being thus happily disposed of, the current number is by no

means considerable. The lower classes do not understand its import, finding it too expensive and too complicated; the *bourgeoisie* looks upon it with distrustful dread, as subversive of all established relations; the upper classes despise it, as a dishonourable way of eluding a contract freely entered upon; the *demi-monde* alone widely avails itself of its provisions, because its denizens are not over-scrupulous, and, according to Alexandre Dumas' expression, "when four *divorcées* meet, they join hands and dance together." A divorced woman is still looked upon as a phenomenon; if she weds again, as a monster: yet they abound in that modern fiction by which French society is judged abroad.

An Englishman who had lived much abroad once remarked that English literature was a fair mantle wrapped round the faults and frailties of English society, while French novels with inexplicable effrontery and unpardonable cynicism created a mirage of shame, behind which the real beauty and sanctity of family lives disappeared.

The appreciation is absolutely correct. *Here* the constant preoccupation of the author is to make the nation appear better and purer than it really is; *there* to be dramatic, sensational, and emotional, even at the expense of woman's virtue and man's honour. British morality is protected by jealous literary defences from a feeling—laudable in itself—that “hypocrisy is the last homage rendered by vice to virtue,” and it therefore is predisposed to consider the licentious pictures of French society presented in French novels as a conscientious confession, while there is as little reality in the presentment as in the mask of untainted purity fastened upon English vice. In England no one acknowledges that there are flaws on home morals, or that there are redeeming qualities in French ones. In the same spirit, very few impartial minds are willing to concede that absolutely wholesome novels are ever written in France, and those of that kind that have been translated, I am sorry to say, find few readers.

Yet even the most maligned authors, those who have not without cause, I admit, been held up to contumely as the guilty exponents of a pernicious school, have written short or long tales at which the most prudent British matron would have no need to blush ; but they are the least known. Zola, the audacious pioneer on a perilous road—Zola, the unwavering apostle of realism—has published not one but several stories as absolutely wholesome as they are dramatically strong—stories standing out luminous and unsoiled from the dark and turbid background of his other works : *l'Inondation*, *l'Attaque du Moulin*, *Jacques Damour* are among the number, but they are ignorantly tabooed with the rest, and banished from the railway stalls together with the others. *Sans Famille* is by the same pen that wrote *Les Vices Français* : Claretie, the author of *Maison Vide*, is chastely patriotic in *Le Drapeau*, a magnificent page that not twenty Englishmen have read ; Daudet fathered *Sappho* it is true, but he also created the pathetic idyll

of *Le petit Chose*; and Guy de Maupassant, whose very name is a bugbear, is the creator of *Mont Oriol* as well as of *Fort comme la Mort*.

There is a reason, not always sufficiently considered, that accounts for the general tone of the *Roman de mœurs*. What is termed *Home* in England, is called *le Foyer* in France, where it is held quite as dear and more sacred. The word is untranslatable; in its complete and abstract meaning it conveys a charming and intangible idea; the irresistible seduction of the innermost, sanctified, hidden hearthstone, to which no alien is bidden, at whose holy tranquil flame no stranger is asked to warm himself. A Frenchman is expansive, hospitable, open-hearted, and courteous; he welcomes his chance acquaintances to his beloved boulevards, his theatres, galleries, libraries, and even arsenals, but rarely invites them to his *Foyer*; hence the stranger denies its existence. The English and the Germans talk and boast of their

homes, no foreigner sitting with them at a public table or taking up one of their novels can remain for an instant ignorant of the fact that they are family-men ; they are never reticent on the subject of their domestic lives, and proud to bare them for investigation. The Frenchman, on the contrary, is singularly jealous of the inviolability of his home, it is with him almost a religion ; his *Foyer* is the holy of holies to which he brings his secret hopes, sorrows and joys ; he adores and guards it ; he shrinks with the exclusiveness of profound tenderness from the introduction of an alien element that might disturb its peace, alter its character, and profane its privacy. This is why the annals of that revered *Foyer* are not recorded in fiction, and why French literature has conveyed so false an idea of French domestic life.

“The romance of family confidences and home incidents,” says a well-known critic, Emile Figuiet, “is not so much considered tedious and monotonous as indelicate ; a Frenchman has no

scruples whatever in painting the portrait of his mistress and relating his light loves to the public in graphic and glowing colours; he admits that from their very nature they are no longer private property and belong to the world; but he deems it indecent to photograph his wife and daughters for a publisher." Whether there is undue exaggeration in this feeling, or it actually exists as it is here described, it has wrought its own chastisement; the respect for a deeply rooted and deeply veiled sentiment of the dignity of home has been interpreted as the evidence of the absence of any such domestic life and affections, and if that particular censure is undeserved, there is little doubt that the jealous reserve exercised with regard to perfectly honourable emotions has produced the opposite evil, and indirectly helped to foster the unsavoury literature of the day. Diverted from topics too sacred to be lightly handled, it dwells on turbid passions and unhealthy excitement.

Never has license in this respect been carried

to such an excess. Whatever may have been the laxity of customs and manners under the second Empire, the books that now pollute the bookstalls and the libraries were then nowhere to be seen. If they existed they were sold and read in secret, the vendor and the purchaser having at least the grace to be ashamed of the transaction. At the present time there exists a group of obscene and licentious writers trading on the lower instincts of humanity, symbolising the decadence of the century, who are a blot on the whole confraternity of authors in whose midst they carry on their vile trade. It is the greatest possible stain on the existing system that they should be able to sell their nauseous wares openly, and imperil the honesty and innocence of the young, although the mere fact of those infamous books not being rejected with horror argues for an already existing depravity. I do not intend even to mention the names of these so-called novelists, and would not have alluded to their existence were it not that

in vindicating French literature in the abstract, justice compels her advocate to state where it falls lamentably beneath the lowest standard.

At last, a few months ago, one of the worst offenders was summoned before his country's tribunals to answer for his misdeeds, and condemned to several months' imprisonment. The example may prove deterrent—it is at all events the first step in the right direction; but a far more complete cleansing of the Augean stables must be carried out before France can show a clean bill of health. If this class of fiction—Heaven save the mark!—has received even a cursory notice, it is because silence might have been construed into condoning so foul an offence. Even should stringent measures not be taken against the propagation and reproduction of similar books, they must in a given time work their own undoing and perish of their own corruption. By the avenging doctrine of compensation, like all crying evils this pestilential outcrop has created a salutary reaction; the

indignation and protest of the community against unbridled licentiousness has promoted a healthier tone ; the spread of the contagion will be arrested and a purer light dispel the noxious fumes and vapours that were the poisonous miasmas of an adulterated and hysterical realism.

Excellent and plausible in principle, the application carried to its uttermost limits has, in the hands of inferior imitators, fallen to the lowest depths ever reached, obliterating all delicacy and perverting even the truths it professed to expose. " It is not Zola who has done so much harm, but his followers," once said the representative of an eminent firm of French publishers in London, who is a clever man and a sound critic. Zola will have to answer before posterity not for what he has himself done, but for the sins of the younger generation who look upon him as their guide and master, forgetful that they are not endowed with his strength and authority, and that they tumble and fall among the pitfalls of the dangerous path he treads so securely.

Realists—or *naturalists*, as they style themselves—are at once very near and very far from the truth. Is Zola himself, who so often complains of not being understood, quite sure of understanding humanity? He is deficient in a higher literary education and philosophical culture; he produces a great deal, reflects sometimes, and never reads. He does not believe that man carves his own destinies, that he is the artisan of his happiness, the awkward or guilty author of his misfortunes; he believes that “vice and virtue are products like vitriol or sugar”; that we are a soft, pliable matter shaped at random by chance, and the result of this creed is *Nana* and *Pot Bouille*. It is not all-sufficient to pick up reality here and there, it must be discreetly, accurately focussed; true perspective is necessary in every art. In actual life the knowledge of our surroundings is slowly, laboriously acquired; the author who voices that knowledge can only master it by the same patient process; an accumulation of details, prosaic or vulgar, horrible or grotesque,

may be real enough, but it carries no persuasion.

A strange anomaly characterises the writings of the would-be exclusive "naturalists" in fiction, an anomaly so remarkable by its apparent incompatibility that it is at once the greatest blemish and the partial condemnation of the school. Avowedly the earnest partisans of pure realism are always in quest of it; they do not sufficiently disguise that they are also eagerly pursuing novel effects of style, leaving the impression on the unbiassed reader that *words* are in their estimation of higher value than *ideas*; they show themselves, when dispassionately examined, less anxious to see the truth than solicitous of *renverser la tournure*, according to the expression of Edmond de Goncourt, one of their standard-bearers and chiefs, or to *piquer l'adjectif* in some new, unique and inimitable fashion. A *stylist* is a man who believes that speech was given to him for itself alone, that words have a high intrinsic value independently

of the ideas it is their secondary mission to convey; that provided the arrangement, juxtaposition, and combination of these words be unexpected, novel and startling, it matters little whether they clothe a true, a fallacious, or a false thought, or even if they are but an empty shell. Victor Hugo plucked his pen from an eagle's wing, it soared to hitherto unknown heights; he enriched the French language, and deserves the gratitude of the linguist and the delicate appreciator of forcible style. But after him the ordinary goose-quill, attempting the same flights with inferior powers, directed by excessive vanity and jealous ambition, distorted and adulterated the magnificent tongue of Bossuet and Voltaire, of Marmontel and Balzac, to the inexpressible sorrow of all lovers of the grandly and simply beautiful.

The pretensions to originality in style and the undue preponderance awarded to it in literary composition has always produced a uniformly inevitable result. The old rhetoricians

of former days, who yearned after pompous rhythm and majestic harmonies, and the modern novelists who strain after loud effects of colouring, picturesqueness, and violent contrasts, both equally sacrificed ideas to form, exalting the latter, allowing the former to follow in its wake as best they could, hampered, delayed, obstructed, even lost in a superabundance of details, descriptions, and considerations alien to the subject. This juggling with words is no doubt brilliant play, and indicates cleverness and dexterity in the performer, but sleight-of-hand and gymnastics are not literature. It is not music either, nor is it painting. The naturalists should learn that the more a subject in fiction is taken from crude contemporary reality the less they are at liberty to overlay it with irrelevant accessories; a painter can throw a glamour over a ruined hovel and the filthy rags of a beggar-child, and yet remain a copyist of Nature; the author cannot convey an exact idea of the abject degradation of the former if he describes it with

the same wealth of words as he would a temple or a palace, nor excite sympathy for the mendicant if he dyes his tattered garments in Tyrean purple.

Mannerism is also a consequence of the undisciplined efforts at novelty in style; the naturalism of Zola is not that of the Brothers de Goncourt, although all three have constituted themselves the apostles of the same realism; they hardly ever strike more than two chords of their limited keyboard: artificial or morbid sensations. The "thrills of nervousity" that are occasionally communicated to the reader are too often obtained at the cost of lucidity, logic, and even grammar.

In literature, be it fiction or the drama, the influence of the critic is somewhat contemptuously denied, and experience has taught that he lacks the power to arrest a man of talent on the road he has, perhaps unwisely, selected, or to turn him from the temptations that will fatally lead him astray, and which are ordinarily an unconscious tendency to exaggerate, not his qualities

but his defects ; on the other hand, a critic has rarely hazarded a suggestion or recommended an innovation, a swerving from dull routine, a revision of antiquated canons, without meeting a host of reckless adventurous spirits who fasten on his guardedly implied hopes and rush them to their uttermost and disastrous fruition. As soon as it was said and written that the great masters of fiction of a former generation, unreservedly lauded and applauded during twenty years, had not after all monopolised and exhausted all the resources of literature, composition and style, that a crowd of new writers came into existence, iconoclasts of tradition, revolutionaries of art, trampling on accepted rules, and ruthlessly destroying them on the sole ground that they were ancient ; they reversed all the laws of Art simply because they had been too long in existence, renouncing fancy and imagination, and making realism their god. These enthusiasts of a new doctrine trusted nothing to the vagaries of the *folle du logis* ; they determined to be

unimpeachably truthful, and they made notes on a blade of grass, on a crust of bread, on a washer-woman's bill. Having gathered a sufficient number of statistical documents of that nature, they jumbled them haphazard into any sort of frame, and exhibited them to the world as a realistic novel. Their system has one drawback : the personal, living, breathing atmosphere without which no work of art is complete, was missing; it had the stolid evidence of ignorant witnesses, not the convincing eloquence of the advocate; it compelled the esteem of the audience, but left it cold. The author who requires to jot down his observations has not been sincerely impressed by them, and cannot communicate the fervid emotion he has not experienced; they are delivered to the reader as they came to him, cut and dried—a census, a *procès verbal*, a catalogue. He has assimilated nothing, and is incapable of conveying to others any conviction or any trace of his own individuality. Conscious of the sterility of his facts, he instinctively seeks to

atone for it by overweighing the simplest, baldest subject, whatever its unvarnished merits might be simply defined, with artificial subtleties of language. The prose of Monsieur Jourdain is a thousand times nearer realism—if realism is Nature—than the industrious fabrication of linguistic curiosities, the laborious effort to reproduce truth under untruthful shapes, till in spite of talent, ingenuity, quaintness and brilliancy, it ceases absolutely to be natural.

The historical novel and the romance of adventure have almost entirely vanished from literary fiction with the elder Dumas, and his great but half-forgotten contemporaries, Frederic Soulié and Eugène Sue. Jules Verne is virtually the only French author who explores distant regions, and carries his readers with him through a series of sensational episodes with such apparent sincerity and good faith, that the fantastical appears real and the improbable possible. He knows how to blend treasures of learning with

treasures of imagination, and has become the ideal writer of the very young while maintaining a hold on the interest of their elders. These qualities and the irreproachable morality of his works have ranked him among the authors crowned by the Academy, and rendered his name a household word in every land. Even if we acknowledge that his teachings are not very accurate or their effect destined to be very lasting, yet justice compels the admission that he has largely contributed to the rousing of youthful intellect and the awakening of juvenile enterprise; he wrote essentially for young people, and has ever been an amusing and sympathetic instructor, for he has never been tempted to waver or recede from the aim he had in view. It has been often said that the workmanship of his books is not artistic enough, but they never pretended to be literary; he had a story to tell, and told it in a plain, straightforward way; had the style been more ornate or polished, it would have been a misfit, the immature minds to whom

Jules Verne addressed himself would not have appreciated a complicated charm.

His imagination is not by any means exhausted; even the sixteen volumes he has published within the last ten years have left a rich fertile mine to work upon. He has in his brain material for dozens more, sure that they will be favourably received by the public, and in turn gain, even before they are read, the high award conferred by the Institute on those it delights to honour. His past work is too widely known to require any further comment; it is more than doubtful if he will leave a successor—unless it be his son Michel—or even imitators; the tastes and fashions of the day inclining to psychological analysis of character rather than to the record of actions and adventurous experiences.

Widely different, but remotely connected with Jules Verne by the affinity which makes both men the explorers of other hemispheres, Pierre Loti has imported into his descriptions and

impressions of foreign climes the hyper-refined element of minute character studies, and a strong impetus of human passion ; not in vain are his scenes laid in far Africa, under torrid skies, in boundless sunburnt plains ; his heroes and heroines are frequently chosen outside our effete civilisation ; they are wild Spahis, children of the desert, dusky maidens with free, unfettered limbs and half-savage instincts, fishermen in Polar seas, strange, powerful, violent figures that do not belong to our dull monotonous world ; but closely observed by Loti their innermost sensations, unknown as they may be to themselves, are dissected with a fidelity and elaboration of detail that is almost supernatural divination, and which makes those untamed denizens of the tropics or the eternal ice have the same lusts, loves, and despairs as the refined products of Parisian romance.

It is impossible to dignify with the title of historical novels the few volumes that have lately professed to reproduce certain events or episodes

of the political and monarchical world under so flimsy a disguise that it was equally easy to discover who the characters were meant to be and how unlike they were to the supposed originals. Sometimes, however, the author was unjustly accused of sacrificing to the never satiated greed for personalities and scandal. When Daudet wrote *Les Rois en Exil*, one of his most powerful novels, he merely fused in a mould of his own fashioning the various types of kings and queens enduring the tortures of merited or unmerited banishment, and having perfected those types he made them the actors in his drama. One trait in each may be traced to a living prototype, but they are not the exact reproduction of any single living man or woman; the reader who has been puzzled by some vague resemblance is soon convinced that he has before him a great figure, but not a portrait.

Ary Acilaw, the anonymous writer who hides her personality under a masculine *nom de plume*, and who is credited with more than one colla-

borateur, has struck nearer home in *Le Roi de Thessalie* and *Une Altesse Imperiale*, but with infinitely less talent and power. A woman's impotent retaliation and narrow rancour are too palpably apparent in the bitter, prejudiced revelations of the Courts of Petersburg and Darmstadt; they are evidently inspired by a spirit of personal revenge, and when it is stated that they show a real acquaintance with the circles they describe, the greatest praise they deserve has been awarded to them. At the same time it is only fair to add that—possibly on account of their indiscretions and defects—they have had a great success of curiosity at home and abroad. The *sans gêne* of interviewers, the inroads of journalism into private life, not only tolerated but encouraged by a society whom cheap notoriety flatters, has had a great share in naturalising this lowest form of literature, generally known and eagerly sought after by a certain class of readers, under the name of *Romans à Clef*.

Theological fiction has never taken in France,

the examples of it are very rare. Every other thesis, however solemn, has been treated under the lightest form, but as yet religion has been exempted. In spite of materialism, indifference, atheism, and free thought, a certain unspoken reverence for sacred subjects underlies the cynicism of the age; the scoffer who hazards the most impious theories and professes utter disbelief, is the first to protest against the introduction of religion in novels and on the stage. *L'Abbesse de Jouarre* of Renan astonished, scandalised, and displeased; *La Faute de l'Abbé Mouret* raised more storms than *Nana* and *La Terre*; and the *Evangeliste* of Daudet, with its theological discussions, is probably the only one of his works that was received with distrust, disfavour, or indifference. It may be objected that the success of *l'Abbé Constantin* was one of the greatest on record, but in writing it Ludovic Halévy composed a gently mundane idyll; he made the central figure more human than priestly, more paternal than ascetic; permitted himself not

the slightest approach to controversy, and the Abbé had of his order only the picturesque sotana and the unctuous charity. Around him were grouped elegant and refined women ; his presbytery had the perfumed graces of a worldly retreat ; his little collations were delicate and Arcadian ; and under any other name the good village priest would have been equally delightful and equally sympathetic.

To a constant reader of French novels their chief characteristic is quickly apparent in the important, almost absorbing, place given to women. Since Honoré de Balzac has shown them fascinating and all-powerful over men, even after they had passed the fatal climacteric age of forty, gallant authors have made them the principal figures in their stories. The *grisettes* of Murger, the queens and princesses of Dumas the elder, the countesses of Dumas the younger, the *Parisiennes* of Arsène Houssaye, the great ladies of Octave Feuillet the *bourgeoises* of the Goncourt, the actresses of Bourget, the *grandes*

coquettes of Maupassant, the humble servant-girls of Lavedan, the devoted mothers and wives, the passionately loving mistresses, the frail and the noble, the erring and the heroic, are the favourite creations of fiction, perhaps because the authors are unconsciously swayed by the dominant position women occupy in France. Nowhere are their claims more thoroughly recognised, although nowhere are they less clamorous for their so-called rights; they have not the ambition of being on a par with men in politics and social questions, but they expect and accept the respectful and trusting homage that is never refused to them. In the *salon*, the counting-house, the political world, and their own homes, they exercise an influence not generally wielded by their foreign sisters; intelligent, active, ready-witted, wisely sympathetic, and energetically helpful, they know how to be the companions, not the imitators, of men; and, in return for those highly appreciated qualities, are placed by the other sex on a level which

entitles them equally to reverence and protection, to ardent love and sincere friendship. The novelist knows that a special interest is vested in his heroines, and for this reason he has made woman his study, and minutely observed her under all her various and multiple aspects, till he has reached a degree of psychological development, the excess of which has led him to regrettable indiscretions. The more a woman lives before and for the public, the easier it is to unveil her and probe her secret thoughts and feelings; she yields herself more readily to the scalpel than those who are defended and guarded by the sanctity of home and the bulwarks of a family; the facilities afforded by the former explains the preponderance lately given in French fiction to doubtful characters, to the adventuress, the *demi-mondaine*, and the *declassée* of every sphere; facile models and commoner types of whom innumerable *replicas* have found their way into modern literature; spurious *Saphos* and *Dames aux Camelias*, vulgarised imitations

that have gone far to give French literature the deplorable notoriety of being scandalous, and French society the unjust reputation of being unblushingly immoral.

Last but not least, French fiction is enriched by numerous novels and shorter stories which are pure gems of literature in every sense, faultless in style, elegant in form, delicate in conception, matchless in purity ; but it is a matter of surprise and pity to find how little they are known abroad, and how by some warped instinct of criticism, while just blame is attached to what is wrong and dangerous, no recognition or praise is awarded to what is good and wholesome.

These general considerations on French novels as they exist to-day, and have existed for the last ten or fifteen years, have been somewhat lengthy ; but before entering upon the enumeration of the modern authors, and recording their work, gifts, qualities, and such personal details as will lay them individually before the reader, it was necessary to state the general conditions

under which they write, and the influences that guide them, so as not to have to refer to them again in the case of each. The breath of an epoch passes into the soul of all who have genius or talent; their talent and their genius thus inspired makes them the fitting exponents of what they see, and maintains them in a reality of observation without which no work, however slight, has any chance of life.

II.

PAUL BOURGET.

His life and habits—His system—An author of analysis—
Eventually a painter of women—*Le Disciple*—His heroines
—His special sphere—*André Cornelis*—*Crime d'Amour*—
Mensonges—A good book and a bad play—His work in
the last decade.

IN one of the immensely tall Parisian houses of the Rue Monsieur, that give a mingled austerity and solemnity to the narrower thoroughfares, M. Paul Bourget dwells. The street is dull and habitually silent, more often in shadow than in sunlight. The gates of his "hôtel" are ponderous, and when they roll back under the hand of the *concierger*, they disclose beyond the arched heights of the *porte-cochère* a vista of a large courtyard, between the stones of which grass is allowed to grow. The building at the further

extremity is of pure Louis the Fourteenth architecture, but the walls are stained by age and the inclemency of many winters, and in some parts show signs of decay. The novelist of mundane life occupies the right wing of this lonely and half-concealed habitation; the broad staircase with its richly wrought-iron balusters of ancient workmanship is imposing; on the second story a corridor, turning at right angles from the landing, ends before a door hung with thick Eastern *portières*, the first intimation that modern taste and innovations have invaded the old world dwelling. Beyond this door a much narrower staircase ascends towards the three rooms most habitually lived in by Monsieur Bourget. The two first are literally choked with carpets, rugs, tapestries, and hangings, over which falls a fitful chequered and prismatic light from stained glass windows. The smoking-room, Oriental in its installation, precedes a spacious apartment whose walls disappear under tall bookshelves, and out of it the favourite retreat of the author is reached—

a comparatively small study containing a low bookcase, a writing-table, a broad divan, and three Venetian chairs. On the walls are excellent photographs of the masterpieces of European art, and a few paintings, a copy of the Titian of the Louvre, by Camille Bourget, the younger brother of the novelist, and in a conspicuous position a reproduction of one of Burne-Jones's pictures. Surrounded by this collection, which at a glance gives his visitors an insight into his tastes, Bourget works with unabated vigour, sometimes for many hours at a stretch. No sooner is one novel concluded than another is began; he is even at times busy on two or three simultaneously. *Pastels* and *Etudes et Portraits* were hardly in the hands of the printer, than the last chapter of *Le Disciple* was nearing its completion, while he was resuming the series of his articles in *La Vie Parisienne* on "Physiology in Modern Love." He owns, with a little deprecation, that he entertains a great fondness for his later work; "but then," he adds with a smile, "you know

that a father always loves his last born child the best."

Henri Taine, whose reputation as a sound critic is beyond dispute, tells us that in the pursuit of great and true ideas it is incumbent to mistrust oneself, necessary to retrace one's steps a hundred times; to stop and verify every conjecture and to travel methodically over the ground already explored by analysis and experience. Paul Bourget has taken these teachings to heart. He occasionally leaves Paris and its atmosphere, at once enervating and exciting; he seeks refuge in some lonely Swiss mountain, or buries himself in an inaccessible, remote Italian village; he brings with him a voluminous literary baggage, and in his isolation and solitude works out his problems, pieces together his extensive notes, recalls his memories, revives his experiences, concentrates his mind so as to reconstruct or resuscitate past impressions, and from this process of condensation such books as *Cruelle Enigme* and *Dernier Amour* are born. His "copy"

is closely written, in minute penmanship. His documents and papers are heaped around him in a confusion the key to which he possesses, and every now and then he stretches out his hand mechanically to stroke the soft, glossy head of his big dog *Noirot*, who is never long absent from his master's side.

In an appreciation full of moderation and not untinged with melancholy, Paul Bourget, writing for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, judged the realistic novel and the *Roman Piétiste* (typified in the *Journal d'une Sœur*, by Mrs. Craven, "Marthe," and others) with equal impartiality. He says "that a narrow doctrine engenders a narrower one still, and that the insignificance of the latter discredits morality as much as the licentiousness of the former calumniates art; and that always and at every degree in the struggle between contradictory elements, the exclusive principles of each are intensified and exaggerated to the detriment of the truly beautiful, and can therefore leave behind no lasting monuments."

This was printed fourteen years ago (in 1876), and may be considered to-day as the fundamental laws on which the young novelist based his literary career. He has attached himself neither to one school nor the other, enlisted under no party banner, with the result that in a remarkably short space of time he became the distinguished and popular author we all know.

He has undertaken and succeeded with rare felicity in analysing the hearts of all human beings, but especially of women ; he has done so not only with a masterly touch, but with a subtle tact that has conquered the esteem and sympathy of the right-minded but cold and austere readers whom his moderation has charmed, and also the praise of another class, equally right-minded, but more " modern " and less severe, who appreciate his insight into actuality, his sincere regard for truth, and possibly his somewhat relentless psychology. Paul Bourget is a favourite with the Northern races — chiefly the Russians — but,

above all, with the fair sex ; women are with him and for him, the laughter-loving and the sentimental, the despairing and the romantic ; those who flirt and those who suffer ; those who exhale their grief or lock in their breasts the secret of their pain and their betrayal.

Without sacrificing his artistic dignity, M. Bourget has, half unconsciously, avoided to give offence or cause displeasure, and has by this diplomatic reserve won the suffrage of the frivolous and the grave, of the women who only *feel*, and of the critics who only *judge*. But to rise higher still, he will have to set aside this reserve, and to shake off some of the circumspection with which he habitually tells the truth. *Truth it is*, no doubt, for he is too conscientious an artist to elude or falsify it ; but halting, timid, apologetic, hesitating, with not enough of the frank audacity which is its supreme authority. His last books, however, *Crime d'Amour*, *Le Disciple* and *Dernier Amour*, already show a tendency to greater emancipation.

The *Disciple* is probably the least attractive of the three ; it is written in a less mundane strain than its predecessors, and is somewhat overladen with erudition and technical psychology ; but it is a remarkable study of the moral condition of a certain class of young men tainted by a disease which is essentially of their epoch, and whose insidious workings are but little known. Before beginning his book, Bourget had gone far deeper into his subject than was his wont, minute observer though he is ; he was absolutely convinced that the youth of the present day are prone to justify, not only all passions, but all errors, by the understanding of those passions and errors. They fancy that life is experience, and that in the endeavour to acquire it they are free to allow themselves every licence—especially if they are literary and can write about their sensations. The occurrence of several horrible and apparently inexplicable murders in France gave a thrilling character of actuality to *Le Disciple*. Bourget, who had been visited by Chambige in his own

rooms, denies that he intended to draw his portrait; he even modified the plan of the story after the notoriety given to the assassin's trial. The idea of the novel was conceived as far back as 1871, and he still possesses the original manuscript with the title of *Sans Dieu*, and a line of the "Imitation of Christ" as motto. The scene is laid in Auvergne, and although Bourget spent a portion of his childhood in that province, he returned there to refresh his memory and corroborate the impressions of the boy with those of the man. However, possibly on account of the fanaticism of Robert Greslou, the new and austere theories of the philosopher Adrien Sixte, which constitute the power and grandeur of the book, *Le Disciple* will be less popular than *Mensonges* and *Cruelle Enigme*, or even the delicate collection of portraits gathered under the names of *Pastels* and *Etudes et Portraits*; the first of the latter series, *Les Etudes Anglaises*, are drawn with delightful freshness and originality.



THE
BOSTON LIBRARY
SOCIETY

HENRI LAVEDAN.

387
YAGEL-RODGE
YTD02

Bourget is *par excellence* the painter of women. He has studied them so thoroughly that he even knows when and how to assume the slightly doctoral and professional attitude of erudition which they worshipped in the austere Caro, and when to elicit the nervous enthusiasm they lavished on Liszt and Rubinstein. He knows how to unveil their souls with such exquisite lightness of touch that they do not deem his act a profanation; he excuses their frailties and softens their fall with such infinite and tender precautions, that they feel more sinned against than sinning, and accuse their own weakness less than fatality. He knows by an adroit flattery to comprise in the cult he offers them all the details of their elegance, their dress, and the trifles that are the reflex of their charming individuality and the tokens of familiar wealth. He knows how to surround them with the vague, vaporous atmosphere that places them in the most favourable light, and makes them ideally luminous and bewitching; they would be ingrate indeed if they

did not reward their painter with sympathy and applause.

Young and successful, Paul Bourget does not allow himself to be carried away by the impetuosity of youth and the intoxication of success; he continues to centre his patient energy and to devote his special gifts of accurate observation to the creation of the finished types of womanhood that are the heroines of his books. It has been said with perfect truth, but also with a shade of reproach, that he selects his models exclusively from the world of elegance and luxury, while others of his fellow-writers, following the example of an unimpeachable master, Balzac, draw their characters from every class of society, from the highest to the lowest rung of the ladder, and by so doing give a proof of the universality of their genius and the wide field of their explorations. But Bourget, it must be remembered, writes essentially novels of analysis, and therefore he is logically correct in placing his feminine creations in the spheres and social positions where they

have leisure to indulge in the refinements of thought and sentiment. The fair women whose feelings he dissects with minute fidelity neither spin nor toil ; they have not the stern, practical realities of life to face ; they need not earn their children's bread or eke out their husbands' scanty salary ; they are not absorbed by material cares and debasing trivialities, and are therefore at leisure to steep themselves in retrospection or visionary aspirations, ideal dreams, and even morbid self-examination.

In limiting himself to those half-hybrid, half-exotic products of Parisian civilisation, Bourget only imitates the great masters of ancient classical tragedy, whose *dramatis personæ* were invariably kings and princes as the most fitting exponents of heroic speech and exalted sentiments. The author whose object it is to retrace social habits and to record the incidents born of the propinquity of human beings, in the ordinary course of the majority of human lives has before him the millions of individuals who fight the

hard battle of poverty and conquer hunger by incessant labour. The deep compassion of the philanthropist, the indignant protest of the reformer, invest this form of realistic literature with pathetic interest or avenging sublimity; but however artistically the writer may deal with the actions of the men and women he represents, he cannot lay bare their soul. They have not the time, hence not the faculty in the midst of a hand-to-hand fight for material existence, of knowing that they possess one, so their historian is powerless to describe its workings and convey an accurate impression of what they themselves ignore.

Paul Bourget has purposely narrowed his circle. He is a poet with a vague femininity of mind that makes him at once instinctively cognisant of the subtle and hidden sensations of women and indulgent to their weakness. He understands their complex nature; their unconscious cruelty and boundless powers of self-sacrifice; their sudden revulsions of feeling and

prompt abandonment; their inexplicable aversions and unaccountable sympathies; above all, he admits, what so few of his sex are willing to concede and so many deny with scorn, that in the supreme and fatal act which throws them guilty and ruined in a lover's arms, there is often a sublime abnegation and infinitely more pity than reciprocal indulgence of passion.

His heroines are all beautiful. He endows them with an imprescriptible birthright of loveliness; they exist for love in centres of gilded and exquisite grace; their fascinations are heightened by a *je ne sais quoi* of charming eccentricity; although essentially Parisian by their education, they are cosmopolitan by instinct, borrowing from the South its sunny Italian philosophy, and from the North the English art of converting their homes into a soft downy nest. They soar above ordinary discomforts and vulgar vexations, and were they not fated to love it would seem as if they were born exempted from sorrow. But it is through love

that they suffer, whether they remain victorious or fall vanquished, whether they are victims or torturers. If they triumph, it is at the cost of exquisite pain, for in the author's estimation love is a merciless battle, in which cruel, deadly blows are dealt with relentless fury. Even in the freshness of their girlhood, his heroines are predestined to the inevitable doom; in early womanhood they rush into the fray, recklessly offering their bosoms to the sword-thrusts, eager to inflict smarting wounds; mothers, they bleed through their sons; sisters, through their brothers; mistresses, through their lovers; always either through blind devotion or through unscrupulous domination.

In pursuance of the same idea, Bourget's heroines are rarely wives; at least in so far that the interest is centred on their conjugal relations only; possibly because he believes that the woman protected by that title in the highest comprehension of the name, attached to her home, entirely one with her husband, has, like

the happiest nation, no history. The prominent characters of his novels—the fair, frail, persecuted, or guilty creatures who love and weep, slaves of one cruel, domineering passion—have not the sacred majesty of the wife shrouding her innermost feelings and felicity behind an impenetrable veil from the questioning eyes of the indiscreet analyst.

Yet the complacent and indulgent advocate of women knows how to be strong and intensely powerful when he chooses, and never more so than in *André Cornelis*.

It is the sorrowful story of a young man who, as he grows to man's estate, is assailed by the horrible doubt that the second husband of the mother he adores has murdered his own father. Unable to endure the sight of the assassin, accepting and then repulsing with horror the thought of a guilty intrigue between the pair in the lifetime of M. Cornelis, he determines to pursue his suspicions to the fatal end. He discovers at last the innocence of his mother and

that of M. de Termonde; but if his stepfather has not actually committed the murder, he has directed it and paid for its execution. André is confronted with the alternative of dragging the culprit before a tribunal and bringing his shame home to his wife, or of remaining silent and conniving at the crime. He seeks to make M. de Termonde confess, but finds him impenetrable, although exhausted by cruel bodily illness. In a frenzy of rage and wrath, after confronting him with the evidence of his guilt, and being powerless to shake his resolution, he stabs him in his own house. Termonde, who has passionately and ardently loved André's mother, who has been a murderer to protect her, with his last breath wishes to spare her the knowledge that he dies through her son's hand, and before expiring has time to write a few lines, in which he states that, unable to endure the pain of his disease, he has committed suicide. With a look of supreme command he defies the young man to gainsay him. Henceforth the son must accept the complicity

he has struggled so long to shake off, and be the agonised witness of his mother's life-long regret for the man she idolised and deemed stainless. The very few characters of the story are masterfully drawn, and if the subject by its nature is harrowing, no objection can be raised against the psychological accuracy of the delineation, and it can be safely read by the sterner moralists who would forbid *Mensonges* and *Crime d'Amour*.*

The latter tells of a conventional, loveless marriage, the love of the woman suddenly awakened for an unworthy object; the fall of Helène Chezél in an impersonal desire to ensure the happiness of her lover, the cold depravity of Armand de Quesnes, her disillusion and remorse, the punishment falling on herself alone, and her expiation through the same feeling that was the motor of her life—compassion. Not a

* Mrs. Cashel Hoey has made an excellent translation of *André Cornelis*, far superior to the generality of those that deface more than they reproduce French originals.

book to put into all hands certainly, but one which, rightly interpreted, teaches a great and salutary lesson. Henry James, a personal and valued friend of the author, agreed with him in their frequent discussions on the art of novel-writing, when Bourget called it "an art the most modern of all, because the most flexible and the most capable of adaptation to the varied requirements of every temperament."

Mensonges, which appeared two years later—in 1887—was partially written at Shanklin during the summer of 1880. Bourget himself calls it a work of doubt and sad analysis, and he has placed side by side the purest and holiest affections and the baleful loves that wreck a life. "Man is like his love," and starting from this axiom, of which experience has shown him the melancholy truth, he has written a powerful story animated with the divine breath of genius. Claude Larcher, the clever, cynical, independent writer, has become the abject slave of the fickle, heartless actress Colette, who tortures and de-

grades him ; Madame Moraine, the woman with the *profil de Madone*, cold, selfish, as depraved as the actress, under her semblance of an irreproachable *mondaine*, enamoured of the comforts she has sold herself to obtain, is suddenly invaded by the ardent curiosity of hearing words of sincere and juvenile love from the lips of René Vincy, a young, talented, and enthusiastic poet, who has just had a successful play acted at the Comédie Française ; they are the heroes of the story, in the midst of a troubled and heavy atmosphere of vice, duplicity, and brazen hypocrisy. Bourget has placed in a tender, half-veiled light the simple, gentle, humble, almost vulgar, but always pathetic groups of the Offarel and Fresnarel families, a contrast and relief to the others, alike in their joys and their sufferings. Then he brings on the fatal, inevitable climax, when René, having well-nigh broken the hearts of those who loved and believed in him, finds his faith in his Madonna shattered by the revelation of her infamy ; she has already wrecked his

energy, genius, and future hopes of fame in the Circean languor of her guilty loves ; and he can only turn with repentant despair to the faithful creatures he had forsaken. Madame Moraine and Colette triumph because they have only senses, vanity and no soul ; and Larcher pronounces the epitaph of *Mensonges* when he exclaims, "Life is but a comedy ; what folly to make it a drama !"

A short analysis of this powerful society novel is necessarily brutal and revolting, for it cannot convey the exquisite graces of diction, the surety and delicacy of touch with which all the incidents are handled, and the rare happiness of style that saves and, so to speak, attenuates the crudities of the subject. These, however, proved insuperable objections to the success of the play which, under the same title, was taken from the book and acted on the theatre of the Vaudeville in Paris, in May 1889 ; it was unmistakably a failure and had but few performances ; the didactic censures of Larcher which inspired

Bourget with some of his most eloquent pages, were a stumbling-block to the actor who personified him; they had carried away the reader, they left the spectator cold; the verisimilitude, the subtle gradations, the rhythmical movement, the sustained and profound interest of the novel were either weakened, lost, or adulterated in the dramatic form; the beauties faded, the defects were accented, the thesis was developed more brutally, and therefore more revoltingly. Once more an author had to learn the lesson they so bitterly resent—that in seeking the added and dazzling triumphs of the footlights, they are unjust to themselves, to their genius, and to the children of their imagination perfect in their original conception and form, they can but suffer from the distorting, displacing, contracting influence of the stage, which so frequently changes a masterly book into a commonplace drama.

To complete the list of the volumes published

by Paul Bourget within the last ten years, we must include *Essais de Psychologie*, *l'Irreparable*, and *Nouveaux Essais*, to be succeeded by his great international novel *Cosmopole*, while *Cœur de Femme*, last year's feuilleton of a daily paper, has had a greater success still in book form. He has made good use of his thirty-seven years of life, retaining only from the troubles and difficulties of his early days an almost morbid sensitiveness. Adverse criticism affects him so deeply that he is a slow and hesitating writer, correcting and re-correcting his manuscripts, and even his proofs and revises, till he drives the printers to despair, and then not wholly satisfied with the result. Delicate in health, worn out by physical nervousness aggravated by moral restlessness, he is never long happy in the same spot. In Paris he complains of the world that lures him from his work, a misfortune he accepts with the naïve vanity of a man pleased to be lionised by society and flattered by women. In the retirement of the country he gets bored,

travelling makes him ill, and it is his little foible that he persistently grumbles, although without acrimony, blaming not life but himself; in spite of this peculiarity he is, especially in *tête-à-tête*, a delightful companion and a charming talker. It is only when he suspects that he is trotted out for the amusement of the crowd that he shrinks within himself and remains obstinately mute. He is not handsome; his appearance is at first sight insignificant and uninteresting; but when he becomes animated, the short figure dilates, the pinched features become marked and expressive, the dull blue eyes sparkle, and he is a different man. Cosmopolitan in his tastes, he professes a strong admiration for English manners, scenery, literature, and women, and an equal appreciation of all things Italian. It cannot be denied that he is fond of money and drives hard bargains for his books, but he must not be accused of • cupidity, as he generously assists the numerous and portionless children born of his father's

second marriage, and holds out a helping hand to young beginners, remembering what was done for him at his *début* by distinguished authors, notably François Coppée.

P. Bourget has disconcerted the general public, and surprised many of those who believed they knew him intimately, by suddenly becoming a Benedict. Last year he married a charming young girl, Mademoiselle Minnie David, and enlisted in the ranks of the celebrated authors of the present day, who, while enjoying to the full the delights of popularity, have sought the joys of the domestic hearth. More than one has confessed—in spite of the thesis supported in his works—that marriage alone can ensure the calm and regularity of life favourable to their craft, and give the comfort so often needed when disappointment assails them.

III.

GUY DE MAUPASSANT.

Boule de Suif—Analogy with Bret Harte—Fifteen volumes of short stories—His style and variety.—Five novels—His views on literature—His four principles—*Fort comme la Mort*—*Sur l'Eau*—Maupassant's way of living.

WHEN the second book of a new and young author reaches its fiftieth edition in a very short time, there can be small doubt but that a star of great magnitude has arisen on the literary horizon. *Bel Ami*, Guy de Maupassant's first novel, which appeared immediately after his initial story of *Boule de Suif* achieved that phenomenal consecration of success from a public who had been electrified by the appearance of a comparatively unknown name among the five contributors to the collection, published under the title of *Les Soirées de Médan*, headed by Emile

Zola. The latter at that time (1880) already hailed in Maupassant a bold innovator and fervent disciple.

Boule de Suif was unanimously accepted as a little masterpiece worthy of the *Raconteurs* of a past epoch, worthy also of Gustave Flaubert, whose influence was perceptible, if not in the choice of the subject, at least in a particular construction of phrases. The story is absolutely untranslatable, although it is a brief episode of excessive simplicity presented with a plainness that is alluringly deceptive; untranslatable, not because the central idea of the sketch is of a nature to shock sensitive moral susceptibilities, but because no other language could render its subtle charm, and all its inherent, innate grace would evaporate in the handling, as the fresh wild beauty of the harebell, that seems so hardy on the hill-side, droops and shrivels in the hand that tries to transplant it.

Among the living writers of the day, I know but one to whom Maupassant can be compared

in this his first *nouvelle*, and that is Bret Harte. The American and the Frenchman have instinctively the same frank boldness and supreme delicacy in approaching a risky situation, the same generous intuition of noble motives in abasement, and of higher impulses in the lowest natures. Both possess to a rare and precious degree the genius-given gift of graphic description in brief rapid touches, whether they portray nature or humanity. In all else the authors of the *Luck of Roaring Camp* and *Boule de Suif* are divergent as the poles; their temperament, mind, character, and sympathies are antagonistic; they neither conceive, observe, or judge mankind alike; their standpoint is different, their views opposed, their work as a whole utterly personal and original. Their nationality is as answerable for the diverse manifestations of equally remarkable talent as the special taste of their respective publics to which they unconsciously conform.

Boule de Suif—need it be told?—is an incident

belonging to the time of the Franco-German war, occurring in the life of a woman whose social status is sufficiently explained by the odd name she bears in all her haunts, and which gives its title to the story. Accident has brought her into the same stage-coach with a group of passengers abandoning the invaded country for the frontier. They are inordinately delayed on the road, and the girl, seeing the hungry distress of her companions who at first contemptuously ignored her, half timidly, half proudly shares with them the contents of a well-filled provision basket, and wins by her generosity some slight thanks. Later on, they find themselves blockaded in an inn garrisoned by Prussians, who—partly in jest, partly in bravado—detain them prisoners, unheeding the clamours of the aristocratic and the bourgeois couples, the supplications of two nuns, the revolt of a *commis voyageur*, and the furious outbreak of Boule de Suif. Her violence and her deplorable reputation, known to the inn-keeper and revealed by him, attract the insolent

notice of the Prussian officer, who singles her out of the group to pay ransom for all; he will liberate them as soon as she consents to what he asks of her. Poor Boule de Suif loathed and abhorred the Germans with all the fervour of a patriotism that had survived her abject degradation—it was her sole remaining dignity, her only virtue; she indignantly refused. But only to become the object of the solicitations of the passengers; all in turn, insidiously, brutally, contemptuously, or hypocritically, represented to her that the duty of self-sacrifice would ennoble her surrender. After a long and tearful resistance, silencing the horror she felt, the miserable creature paid the forfeit required, and the next day the stage-coach was free to depart. Boule de Suif was the last to take her place, her troubled eyes seemed to seek a gratitude that would soothe her outraged love of France. The men smiled, the women removed their skirts from the contact of hers, the nuns bent over their prayer-books; she was ostracised,

crushed under a scorn so deep and so heavy that she quailed beneath it in wonder and grief. The hours passed, the travellers partook of the victuals they had brought, but offered her none, and yet they could see that she was faint and unprovided. "She felt herself drowning in the contempt of the honest scoundrels who had first sacrificed, then disowned her like a useless, unclean thing. She thought of her big basket of savoury food and good wine, greedily devoured by them; her anger fell like a tightened rope that snaps asunder; she was going to cry! With a terrible effort she straightened herself, and swallowed her sobs as children do; but the tears would rise—two big drops glistened on her lashes and rolled slowly down her cheeks; others followed more rapidly, trickling like water from a rock and falling regularly on her plump bosom. She sat erect, her eyes fixed, her face rigid and pale, hoping that she was not observed." Her companions pretended not to see; they talked gaily, played cards, and when it grew

dark began to sing noisy, rollicking songs to beguile the time. "Boule de Suif was still crying, and sometimes a sob she could not suppress was heard between two merry refrains in the deepening gloom!"

Celebrity had not to be wooed long by the young author. It came to him rapid and brilliant, and it is not his least merit that he was not dazzled by it; nor did a too exalted confidence in his powers cause him to grow careless or indolent. He is of the race of strong men eager for the fray; he has a vigorous, active, energetic temperament; and although such a *début* as *Boule de Suif* was a serious rival to future productions, yet in the quickly following books of the last ten years he has never remained inferior to himself. On the contrary, he has constantly progressed, and now stands unrivalled as a writer of short stories, and ranks high among the foremost novelists.

Between 1880 and 1890 Guy de Maupassant has published fifteen volumes of *nouvelles* under

different titles ; two books of yachting sketches, *Le Horea* and *Sur l'Eau*, and five long novels. Short stories are a form of fiction much more prized and appreciated in France than in any other country ; the condensation, the brevity, the polish, and the supreme elegance of the few pages on which the curtain rises and falls, are especially Gallic, and the language lends itself to the subtle *sous-entendus* that supplement mere words to the intelligent reader. Maupassant must be read and re-read before his art and execution can be exhaustively enjoyed. In his briefest tales he has the secret of compelling attention and exciting interest ; he knows how to place his characters so securely and squarely that they immediately appear to be old acquaintances ; we do not see, we recognise them. He knows how to proceed without any visible workmanship ; his effects are sure, swift, and marvelously simple. In three words he paints a landscape, an attitude, an action. Sometimes the plot is almost *nil*, but it is almost always

then that the intensity of the interest rises to dramatic power. Guy de Maupassant is equally at home in every variety of subject; he depicts with the same truth and fidelity the cautious astuteness of the Norman peasant in his farm, the African in his *gouri*, the Parisian beauty in her boudoir, the Almées dancing in a bazaar of Tangiers; he introduces omnipotent love—in which he ardently believes—with a broad, sincere, poignant eloquence, absolutely personal, un-borrowed, and unimitated. With tranquil, half-unconscious audacity he uses crude words for violent situations, and hesitates at none; but he does not for all the unchastened force of his language leave the impression of grossness or licentiousness, perhaps because his unvarnished, correct style is almost classical in its buoyant, living simplicity; because, as an eminent critic once said, he is *puissamment joyeux*, enamoured of life, and even materialism if it is beautiful.

Like most authors who have achieved fame in one line of composition, Maupassant was sup-

posed unable to write long stories as good as his short ones. Granted that his books are unequal in merit, there is not one of them deficient in his admirable qualities of style and his own potent vitality. *L'Heritage* is a somewhat spiteful picture of the Ministère de la Marine, where he spent some distasteful years, and which, being rich and independent, he left when he was not much more than twenty. *Une Vie* is a magnificent piece of work, broad, majestic, monotonously desolate, like a lonely, solitary, wild stretch of moorland. *Bel Ami*, the same that ran through fifty editions, is strong, earnest, and incisive; in it the author gives the first true conception of the great factor *la chance*, and initiates the reader to the eternal battle fought for success and wealth by the class of ambitious men now called *struggle for lifeurs* in the hybrid, odious slang of the day. *Mont Oriol*, by some critics called the best, gives a profoundly humorous and wittily ironical account of the Casino in a rising watering-place, of the real and fanciful patients, the

two rival doctors, the *table d'hôte*, petty intrigues, and shady speculations. Into this amusing canvas is woven the romance of Christiane d'Andermatt's life, her loves, trials, and sorrows; she is one of the most refined and complete creations of the novelist whose heroines are all so full of life and feeling.

Pierre et Jean, which Maupassant calls a "psychological study," and in which the revolt of a son doubting his mother's honour is told with incredible force, was preceded by a long preface entitled *Le Roman*. It embodies Guy de Maupassant's opinions of what novels ought to be.

"All writers," he says, "Victor Hugo as well as Zola, have persistently claimed the absolute, indisputable right of composing—that is, imagining and observing—according to their personal conception of art. Talent proceeds from originality, which is a special fashion of seeing, understanding, and judging. . . . The realist, if he is an artist, will endeavour, not to

show us a perfunctory photograph of life, but to give us the most complete, telling, and convincing vision of reality itself. . . . To be true is to convey a perfect illusion of truth, according to the ordinary logic of facts, and not to write them down in the meaningless jumble of their actual occurrence. The realists of talent should more aptly be termed illusionists."

During seven years Maupassant wrote poetry, stories, *nouvelles*, romances, and even an execrable play; nothing of all this now remains. On Sunday mornings he would carry all he had scribbled in the week to Gustave Flaubert—whom he admired intensely, and who had taken a strong fancy to the young man—and read over his manuscripts aloud. The master listened attentively, criticised, probed, excised, corrected, and the *séance* ended with the final destruction of the whole, but with strong encouragement to persevere.

"Whoever possesses any originality," said the author of *Madame Bovary*, "must begin by

extracting it; whoever does not, must acquire it. Talent is a long patience. Look at any one thing you intend to depict, long and attentively enough to discover some aspect which has been seen and expressed by no one else. In everything there lurks an unexplored corner, for we have contracted the habit of using our eyes with the remembrance of what others have thought about what we see. The merest trifle contains the unknown. If you wish to describe a fire burning, or a tree on a plain, stand in front of that fire or that tree till they cease to resemble in your eyes any other fire or tree. It is thus that you will become original."

Maupassant took these teachings to heart; they had fallen on fertile ground, and the harvest has proved generous and abundant. He once declared that his literary career should be guided by three rules: "Never the cross; never the Academy; probably never marriage; possibly never *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. Never the cross, because it is useless, because it must be

petitioned for, and the demand is a personal abasement not justified by the boon ; never the Academy, because holding, as a literary man, decided literary opinions, I should be compelled to defer to men (not all) whom I do not esteem, in their literary capacity of course ; I also say : probably never marriage, because it is impossible to foresee what idiocy a woman may induce you to perpetrate ; and I add possibly never *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, because I make no difference between printed sheets—they are all on the same level.”

So far, M. de Maupassant had been faithful to these self-imposed rules ; but in February last, *Notre Cœur* appeared under the salmon cover of M. de Buloz’s publication, creating an immense flutter in literary circles. With his novel, modern, naturalistic fiction had invaded the austere pages of the magazine, and opened the door to further subversive innovations. “ Maupassant has come at last to the *roman d’analyse*,” exclaimed Paul Bourget, “ and I am proud to see it.”

Fort comme la Mort, published last autumn, astonished the public by a considerable accession of talent; it was considered superior even to *Pierre et Jean*, one of his best. It is the story of a woman who having entered into a *liaison* with a celebrated painter without exciting the suspicions of a good-natured but intensely commonplace husband, centres her whole life in that passion, and devotes all the energies of a heart and soul, naturally lofty and good, to keep the affection and ensure the happiness of the man to whom she has sacrificed her honour. For twelve years she is successful, and almost content in her anomalous position; then her daughter, who has been educated in the country by an aged grandmother, returns home, grown up beautiful, charmingly innocent and gentle, and wonderfully like her mother. The painter, who had always liked and petted the child, finds in the girl the perfect presentment of the woman he loved as she was in the early days of his idolatry, and for whom he still feels

reverent tenderness. No longer young, unconsciously, unknown to himself, he begins to love the daughter in the mother. She, who has never been jealous, has the sudden revelation of this disaster, and warns the artist of the abyss before him. Her words are a flash of lightning; in vain he denies, in vain he struggles with his weak heart; his own jealousy of the girl's future husband, her absolute ignorance of the tragedy enacted at her side, goad him to despair. As he has ever done, he pours out his confession to the elder woman, and in her immense love she still finds the courage to comfort, advise, and strengthen him, and to wring from him the promise that he will leave Paris till after the marriage. He parts from her, is crushed by an omnibus, and dies holding her hand, and carrying away her forgiveness. This subject, so harrowing and painful in itself, has more than once tempted the novelist and the dramatist in France and abroad; never has it been treated with such pathos and in a fashion that excites pity instead

of horror. The cruel expiation of the mother watching the rapid fading of her beauty, her desperate efforts to retain her youth, her unvarying tenderness for her child, rivalry forgotten in despair, are placed before the reader with such consummate art and powerful emotion, that the guilt of the primordial situation which is the pivot of the plot is condoned by the bitter punishment and expiation. The story is not an appeal to sensational excitement or a medium to sensuous pictures; it is a deeply studied dissection of two human hearts who have attempted the impossible task of *honestly* living a guilty life.

Sur l'Eau ("Afloat" in the English version) is an absolutely delightful series of sketches of the Mediterranean coasts, "of water, sun, clouds, and rocks," taken from the deck of Maupassant's yacht *Le Bel Ami*, during a cruise in the spring of 1889, interspersed with racy anecdotes and humorous portraits. While nothing is more poetical than his musings on the moonlit waters,

nothing is more funny than his account of the murderer condemned to death at Monaco, who could not be executed because there was no guillotine, nor imprisoned because there was no prison, nor watched because it proved too expensive, nor transported because it would entail the removal of an escort from other duties; who was finally allowed to take his meals with the palace servants, to roam to Monte Carlo, and venture at the tables a five-franc piece handed to him for the purpose. As he had been put on parole, he obstinately declined to leave the principality of his own freewill, and finally consented to accept a pension of six hundred francs so as to rid the State of his keep.

Maupassant's superabundant physical vigour and strong vitality require action, exercise, air, light, wide horizons, distant shores, sunny skies, or glacial regions, in which his powerful lungs expand, and his limbs and brain have free play. He suddenly disappears from Paris, wanders by land and sea, on foot, on horseback, in his

yacht, leading the life of his associates of the hour, hardy, abstemious, indefatigable, and then as suddenly returns to his city haunts with a world of pictures and half a dozen unwritten stories in his mind, to resume the ardent, feverish existence he has momentarily abandoned. A few weeks later those pictures and those stories are given to the public; his prodigious facility knows no weariness; his spirits never flag; as the years roll on his pantheistic, Gallic, original cult of the beautiful seems to become intensified, and the reputation he has made at home and abroad of being the coming representative writer of French fiction is amply justified, for he is never mediocre or commonplace, always captivating, and frequently admirable.

But although he is barely forty-two, squarely built, born with a robust Norman temperament, his constitution has not resisted the pace at which he has lived; tried by reckless excesses, by an irresistible impulse to enjoy existence to its uttermost limits, Maupassant is threatened with a disorder

of the spine, the first symptoms of which are his inordinate craving for locomotion ; since he left his *garçonnière* near the Parc Monceaux two years ago, he has already changed his quarters three times, and no one can be certain of finding him to-morrow where they left him to-day. He is fond of society, but not as much as Bourget, and is not so particular in the choice of the people he visits, showing himself strangely partial to mixed company for a man who is so invariably refined in his style.

IV.

Henry Lavedan, *un jeune*—His birthplace—*Mamselle Vertu*—The end of *Mie de Pain*—Short stories—*Lydie*—*Sire*—The funeral march of Royalty—*Les Inconsolables*—*Manhecourt* in *La Vie Parisienne*—His first play—Catulle Mendès, an erotic writer, neither “romantique” nor naturalist—His marvellous style—His plays—His best stories—His book on Wagner—His duels.

“*Un Jeune*” most decidedly is M. Henri Lavedan, but not a tyro, and if not quite the equal yet of Maupassant as a writer of short stories, still a fortunate and promising competitor for the same kind of fame. His manner differs from the methods of the author of *Boule de Suif*; indeed, he has no manner save his own. Like Jules Lemaitre, the eminent critic of the *Journal des Débats*, he was born in the Orleanais, the placid province of small rivers, high poplars, and low ranges of smooth hills, crossing and recrossing the fertile plain with their green ridges. In both

men the serenity and moderation of their native scenery seems reflected ; they have no exaggeration, no violent outbursts ; theirs is a limpid, accurate, and delicate style, somewhat slender, but always true.

Lavedan is singularly felicitous in capturing an idea on the wing and fixing it on paper with one stroke of his pen ; his rapid sketches are expressive and resembling enough to require no further manipulation. A character, a whole life is revealed in one word ; sometimes not even as much, merely by an attitude, a sigh, a gesture ; the dim figures in the background are themselves excellent portraits.

Mamzelle Vertu was his first novel, humorously dedicated to "the late M. de Monthyon," and crowned by the Academy of France. It is the sad, simple, almost vulgar story of a poor peasant servant girl, transplanted to Paris, who has known of life all its tribulations and only the arid joys of labour, abnegation, and unswerving fidelity to her masters, and whose sole reward

is a lonely death on the pallet of her attic. Lavedan has dwelt with simple sincere pathos on poor Victoire's long and patient martyrdom ; he has scathed with quiet irony the hypocritical virtues of her employers and the besotted ignorance of the pompous judges who award to the canting egotism of the latter the substantial benefits which were due to *Mamzelle Vertu's* admirable devotion.

The biography was not long enough to stand alone, so the volume is made up with a dozen and a half of stories, so short they might almost be called numbers. As much as the principal tale, they gave convincing evidence that a talented and original writer had entered the lists. I cannot resist the temptation of giving *in extenso* all the latter part of one of these sketches for which I have always had a strong partiality.

The scene is laid in the Louvre, in the *Galerie des Antiques*.

"A custodian was dozing on a form, with

open mouth. At a short distance from him, in the embrasure of a window, a young girl dressed in black was copying the Diana of the Faun. . . . She was pale, with clear calm eyes like an industrious child's—large brown eyes alternately lifted to the marble goddess, and dropped on the drawing block over which wandered her fingers soiled with black chalk. Her sleeves, too short for her arms, showed the delicate white wrists; and her feet, half hidden by her woollen skirt, rested on a rung of her wooden stool. They were not idle feet, but honest little feet descending every day from the heights of Montmartre and Courcelles; feet that tramped stoutly in their thin leather boots worn by long walks over distant and ill-paved streets. She worked steadily, nothing disturbed her, neither the stifled laughter of a group of *rapins* in front of a Hercules, or the 'shocking' bleated by a herd of female English visitors, or the snores of the custodian, or even the presence of a pale gaunt youth standing behind her. Every now

and then a quick petulant gesture, the impatient movement of a schoolboy who has blotted his copybook, the protruding of a pink-tipped tongue between the lips, the bread hurriedly crumbled over the same lines, revealed the pretty, exquisite pantomime of the woman-artist before her model, and exasperated by its implacable perfection.

“Daylight was waning. In winter, night is quick to come ; abruptly it invaded the large hall, dropping broad black stains in the corners, unrolling a blind of shadow before the tall windows, muffling the statues in a covering of darkness, thick and yet diaphanous, and through which the eye could still distinguish here and there vague white forms, the vanishing contour of a rounded shoulder, the fastening of a peplum, the wing of a Caduceum, the curve of a hip, or the scarcely indicated line of a slender ankle. . . .

“The English visitors had drifted towards the doors, followed by the art students, still

chaffing and hustling each other ; silence reigned. The great Louvres clock boomed out the quarter. The custodian roused himself.

“ ‘ Closing time ! ’

“ His voice rolled under the dome, taken up by the echo, and the ‘ Antiques,’ yawning, stretching their limbs, weary with the eternity of their marmorean attitudes, seemed to whisper among themselves : ‘ At last ! Closing time.’ The young girl rose, placed her portfolio against the wall, shook out her skirts, and turned to remove her hat from the window fastening on which it hung ; then the tall gaunt youth, stealthily, with the greedy suppleness of a cat watching a bird, put forth his hand and seized the big piece of breadcrumb left on the stool beside the pencil-box. Thrusting it rapidly into his bosom he remained motionless, dazed, his feet nailed to the floor, his heart beating like a bell, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, not even the voice of the bearded custodian saying gruffly : ‘ Come along, young fellow—what are

you doing there—don't you see it's closing time?'

"It was not the sweet wholesome bread that gladdens the eyes and has so clean a smell, not the blond, golden bread with crumb like cake for old gums, and crisp crust for sharp young teeth; the bread that is plentiful and luscious, eaten with joyous thoughts of rich harvests, with gratitude to God who gives it, and blessings on the baker who kneads it with his strong white arms, and sends it every morning fresh and warm to awakening man. No; it was a hard, stale black piece of bread—of a quality that chokes without being nutritive; and yet the pale youth had not found it too bitter, for on the morrow at the same hour he was once more standing and waiting behind the young girl, who sat at her drawing absorbed as ever.

"Everything happened exactly as the day before; the clock had the same sound to ring out the same hour; the custodian the same voice for his

monotonous warning; again the girl rose. A piece of bread, enormous and crusty, remained on the stool ready to be taken—as the day before.

“The tall sallow youth once more stretched out his hand; in his eagerness he struck the stool, and it fell.

“He started and drew back, trembling violently in fear of being discovered; but as his fingers closed tightly over the stolen bread, a rush of blood reddened his face and two large tears of gratitude for the young girl, who had not even looked round, rolled slowly on his thin wan cheeks. . . .

“The bread was new!”

Possibly this is not the best of Lavedan's short stories, but it shows the excessive simplicity of his manner, and how little he seeks sensational incidents or recondite phraseology for his effects. At times, however, he is more dramatic, but always without extravagance or attitude. *Il est l'heure* is the account of an

execution, thrilling in its stern sobriety of detail. *Poule* is a fascinating revelation of a child's morbid sensitiveness under the most matter-of-fact exterior, ending with self-sought death under an engine in a school holiday; but to enumerate all that are worthy of attention would be to name them all.

Lydie is longer than *Mamzelle Vertu*, not quite so good perhaps, but written in the same vein of tranquil irony. Assumption and egotism are not flagellated by the lash of a censor, but presented in their true light by the plain impartial exposure of the actions they inspire; and *Lydie*, the heroine, is another victim, more refined than *Victoire*, of the ferocious, half-unconscious self-love of a narrow mind. Provincial middle classes are observed without exaggeration either of sentimentality or ridicule, with something of the unimpeachable sincerity of Balzac, and not a little of his faculty of detail.

Lavedan's books have hitherto escaped the

Index Expurgatorium of austere susceptibilities ; they are as safe reading as if they were not wholly charming and original ; without straining at perfunctory morality or putting his characters in the strait-waistcoats of prudery, he never offends ; he is neither didactic nor gross, hypocritical or licentious ; he has Gallic wit, a great deal of natural *expansion*, a fund of joyous yet imperturbable raillery, and a very just feeling of the equipoise in which his special gifts must be held to preserve their full quality. He is at once very French and very cosmopolitan ; he deserves to be better known or better translated abroad ; that he is not is a distinct loss to foreign readers.

Sire is a one-volume rhapsody—a good-humoured epigram, a half-sad, half-humorous skit on monarchical fanaticism. It is the lightly handled, deftly written, fanciful history of an old frail Legitimist countess, who has fostered and fanned her devotion to royalty till her mind has nearly given way and her health fails ; she is at

death's door when her family doctor and her attendants, as a last resource to rouse her, induce a species of ruined adventurer to personify the Dauphin of France, whom she fondly believes never to have perished in the Temple. The ruse succeeds, she recovers to worship her *Roy*, and it is found impossible to undeceive her. The adventurer, aware of the profit to himself if he kept up the part he had been bribed to play, refuses to give it up. Deceived, fooled, duped, entranced, the infatuated countess not only lays her fortune at his feet, but accepts as a supreme honour what she proudly calls a morganatic marriage with Louis XVII. In this purely platonic union she gives him all her wealth "for the Cause," all her service for his rank, all her love for himself. When the impostor no longer conceals his gross sensuality and coarse tastes, she suffers acutely and forgives; he dies before he has dealt her the deadly blow of revealing the stratagem, and having lost her illusions in the man, but retained all her

blind faith in her king, she has him buried in her park with royal honours. But a few hours before the funeral ceremony—

“ Abruptly, intuitively, in a sudden revelation of the future, she understood that it was all over and for ever with that indescribable and glorious thing, *monarchical prestige*. Assuredly monarchy was not dead with him whom they would so shortly lay in the tomb; it would live for centuries to come and prosper on the soil of France, who was indebted to it for its indestructible grandeur. Revolutions might shatter it in the morning, only to render it more necessary at eventide; it would rise incessantly from its ashes, stronger and more complete, but without *prestige*, without the charm, brilliancy, and grace that gilded and adorned it—without the flowers of etiquette that were the powdered bloom of its ever attentive politeness, without the worship and religious adoration of a whole nation. It was all over with Versailles and Marly; with the Swiss guards watching at the doors of queens;

with the gorgeous coaches that neither crushed nor bespattered, but were not so well guarded that a Ravailac could not fling himself on their wheels, or so rapid that they were not caught up on the road to Varennes. All over with the palaces, the aquatic fêtes, the Apollos on the fountains, the nymphs in the pleasaunce, the fifes, the plumes, the sonorous cymbals, the hunts, and the ancient chase! All over with *Monsieur, Frère du Roi, le Dauphin, Mesdames, les Enfants de France*, those tall appellations six feet high, magic words dear to the heart of the loyal, and that conjured up the whole of history when they fell from the mouth of heralds or the tremulous lips of Bossuet! All over with the reign and splendour of the sword, the national weapon of Court and battlefield, never surrendered, and drawn for so little—for a woman, a flower, or a ribbon. Ah! undoubtedly the future would have as much courage, but never again the smiling bravery of the past, the courtesy of Fontenoy; flags might always wave, but never more

standards and pennons ; there would still remain a nobility, but no longer *gentilshommes*. And what was to become of the Lilies—the Lilies of France—the ideal snow-white flowers for which so much blood, pure and noble blood, had been shed? After following and accompanying the monarchy step by step throughout centuries, after blossoming on its blazon and its crest, from the helmet of the Crusaders to the felt hat of Charrette's *gars*, they, too, erased from the stone of palaces and the marble of tombs, driven from everywhere—dress, cockades, sabres, and escutcheons—would disappear for ever, to live only in the memory of the future races as divine memories, immortal, poetical, and legendary flowers.”

Partly with emotion and partly with bitterness has Lavedan written this “Funeral March of Royalty”; the Legitimist party who treat him as a spoiled child have forgiven him *Sire*, which from any other pen would have wounded and affronted its members. The subtle atmosphere

of Trianon and Versailles, the faint perfume of powders, the rustling of Pompadour silks, and the *galuchat* scabbards of Court swords, impart an exquisite air of reality to these highly fantastic pages, and withal they evoke a vague echo of Don Quixote's inimitable pleasantries and touching fidelity in their pathetic earnestness.

But whoever would wish to appreciate Lavedan's special and purely personal flavour should read his *Inconsolables*; hardly a volume, a slender pamphlet of 134 loosely printed, broad-margined pages, but as perfect a literary gem as was ever chiselled by a clever lapidary. It is a cruel little masterpiece, for it is inexorable; its raillery, for being veiled, is not the less swift, sure, and trenchant, and cuts through the assumed *bon-homie* that clothes it. Not a word too much, not a word too little; no preoccupation of the best way of telling the story; it tells itself; line follows line as naturally as the days follow the days; smoothly the sequence is reached with the logic of common sense, which here becomes the

logic of genius. You feel as you proceed that you had prophesied every coming thought of those two widowers of the same (divorced) wife, uniting their two bereavements in a posthumous, exaggerated worship of a dead woman. You watch them exhaling their fictitious regrets, their preternatural lamentations in the commonplace surroundings of a vulgar existence, and you do not wonder at the slow lassitude, outcome of their tears, the dolorous and wearisome progress of resignation born of fatigue. Lavedan has charming ways of conveying the gradual transformation of a feeling which he lets you guess was always more superficial and ostentatious than deep.

“The end of that summer was soft and very consoling. On certain nights the sunsets had the efficacy of soothing words; the strange heavens of beyond the tomb were infinitely affectionate; the mystic moon, blue and silver—like the Virgin’s colours—fortified the tender assurance of possible meetings somewhere after

death in a preferable valley." Then the minor key changes : " Our sympathetic widowers enjoyed two months of suave melancholy, and began to call each other *thou*."

After meeting accidentally in the churchyard on the day of their Amelie's funeral, the two husbands, who had begun by being furiously indignant at each other's loud and uncontrolled grief, amicably leave the cemetery together in order to exchange funeral confidences; they insensibly glide to the fraternity of daily intercourse, and to a life in common, so as to dwell more uninterruptedly on the virtues of the dear departed; they propose to have a picture made of her hair, and contribute to this work of art—a Colosseum—the tresses they have each treasured, one dark, the other grey, and share the expense. Then, "only a year had gone, a year since they first met at Amelie's grave, and the image of the beloved dead was melting vaguer and vaguer into the past. Ah! how it eluded them, in spite of

their efforts. One year But far from owning themselves defeated, the more they felt the dead woman slip from their memory, the more they strove—from pure affectation, each as regarded the other—to recall her at any cost, to ransack their imagination and excite their feelings, in order to impart to the expression of their tepid regrets an accent of sincerity; with active and exuberant emulation they both tried to seem more inconsolable and more crushed than their fellow-mourner; it was a race of posthumous attentions, a fraternal and courteous struggle of outward homage, a duel of flowers and beadwork garlands. One morning Lenormand, the last husband, appeared at breakfast in a cravat with white spots; Robin, his predecessor, pretended not to notice this relaxation of deep mourning, but at dinner wore shepherd plaid trousers. Lenormand, vouchsafing no remark, sported a dark blue waistcoat the following day, silently capped by Robin with buff gaiters; and before the end of the

week light and even bright colours were worn, the broad crape hatbands vanished, and the tall hats shone glossy and resplendent. The widowers still occasionally pored over the mementoes of Amelie and read her old letters to both; they still discussed her in their long *tête-à-têtes*, but no longer with tearful unmingled praise; they dwelt less and less on her admirable virtues, and more and more on her failings and defects, till one evening they agreed that she had been irritating, vulgar, unbearable! After that, having enjoyed a better dinner than usual, and finding themselves in a genial mood, arm-in-arm on the boulevards, where two pretty girls passed and looked at them with smiling eyes and laughing, encouraging lips, the widowers, irrevocably consoled, exclaimed in one breath, 'Let us follow them!'

Henri Lavedan is thirty-one; he is unmarried, and lives in one of the quiet houses of the Rue St. Guillaume, Boulevard St. Germain; the floor above is occupied by Mlle. Marie Anne de Bovet,

a clever young lady who is well known in Parisian literary circles for her contributions to magazines and daily papers, for her travels in Ireland, and her exhaustive Life of Gounod, written for the English public. She is Lavedan's colleague in that eminently French publication, *La Vie Parisienne*, in which he began, in 1888, under the *nom de plume* of Manchecourt, a series of articles which were so favourably received that he has been induced to print them in book form under the characteristic title *La Haute* (a pithy rendering of "High Life"). In a number of wittily written dialogues he conveys, carefully observed, the traditional snobbery, the refined frivolity, polite impertinence, and indolent elegance of the class called *les Mondains*, with the special mode of feeling, thinking, and speaking of the curious and exceptional races of which the world of fashion is composed. Society people were pleased and amused at recognising their likeness to those clever silhouettes; the less frivolous readers appreciated the discreet cynicism, easy philosophy, and

unconscious disdain lurking under brilliant wit and exquisite elegance.

Lavedan is lucky and ambitious ; having tasted the intoxicating draught of success in fiction with hardly more trouble than raising the goblet to his lips, he yearned to try his powers on the stage. His good fortune did not desert him. His first play, a comedy in four acts, *La Famille*, was read at the Comédie Française, unanimously accepted, and put into rehearsal in an incredibly short time. It was acted in May of the past year, and kindly received ; if it is by no means a perfect or even a very good piece of dramatic work, it yet gives enough promise of future excellence to encourage Lavedan to renewed attempts in that line ; but those who have smiled with moist eyes at *Mamzelle Vertu* and *Sire*, will perhaps feel a vague regret that the young author should stray from the path in which his *débuts* have been so brilliant and awakened such hopeful anticipations.

If M. Lavedan's writings can be recommended without reserve, in a certain sense, not so those of Catulle Mendès. Indeed, it had better be plainly said from the first that he is anything but virtuous; he does not hesitate to select libertine subjects and to treat them in a libertine fashion; in the hands of a realist the result would be brutal, gross, glaringly immoral; under the dexterous manipulation of an author who is at heart a *romantique*, they are invested with a thousand seductions of phrases, a glamour of idealism, calculated to deaden the just sense of right and wrong, thus adding one peril more to dangerous stories. Having honestly forewarned the reader, so that he should not be tempted even by such delusive titles as *Jeunes Filles* and *Pour lire au Couvent*, to place Catulle Mendès in a young girl's bookcase, I now feel at liberty to state with equal frankness in what respects he is a *littérateur* of merit and endowed with remarkable and absolutely individual gifts.

He belongs to the generation of writers

standing half-way between the old "romantism" which has almost died out in spite of a recent attempt to revive the elder Dumas' plays, and "naturalism," which is fast becoming intolerant and intolerable, and only retains its hold on the public by the *prestige* of three or four authors of exceptional genius, who save it from the extinction to which their imitators doom it. These innovators have, with the love of form and nature, a higher love for intellect and philosophical culture. They do not call themselves a "school," because they contemptuously discard a common label, priding themselves on strength and contrasting personalities. Catulle Mendès is undoubtedly foremost in their ranks; Paul Hervieu and J. H. Rosny follow him closely, not because they servilely copy him, but on account of a same capacity for investing ideas with the magic of words, the same complex charm of mystery and pathos, and because, like him, they are not afraid to venture into hitherto unexplored regions, justifying their boldness by

the imprescriptible rights of nature, psychology, and observation.

Catulle Mendès had been one of the best French Parnassian poets, and when he suddenly wrote a novel—*Le Roi Vierge*—the attempt was a literary event; he was applauded for uniting *modernité* with lyricism, and hailed as the direct son and heir of Victor Hugo. He has since persevered in the same lines, partly because they are admirably adapted to his temperament, partly because they open a wider field to his refined sensuality and genuine poetical organisation. He is undoubtedly a poet—an erotic poet, certainly—but one both in prose and verse. He is also a wonderful stylist, and much may be condoned because he has ever earnestly loved his art, and even in his most frivolous works he has never penned one sentence which is not well constructed, picturesque, and harmonious. If he has not actually created a French language, he has made it doubly rich, expressive, and pictorial, infinitely varied in its witchery of words; he

has composed new rhymes, annexed fresh similes, expanding and lifting phraseology to broader flights in each of his rapidly successive volumes. Critics have censured him for over-polish, and even mannerism ; but it is difficult to see how he could have avoided a certain *précieux* hyper-refinement, any more than the artists in enamel of the seventeenth century could produce aught but the exquisite, delicate cherubs and nymphs of their miniatures. On the contrary, it should be a source of admiring amazement that he can accomplish the prodigies of dexterity, the marvels of seductive hypocrisy, by which he expresses, without being odious, absolutely odious ideas. He may not be sympathetic, or even deserving of sympathy, but he is an artist, and a singularly clever one ; as poet, novelist and dramatist, M. Catulle Mendès is also the latter ; he has written a *féerie*, *Isoline*, the spectacular success of a recent winter season in Paris ; and *La Reine Fiammetta*, a drama in six acts and in verse, given at the *Théâtre Libre* in

January 1889. The plot was as simple as the lines of a tragedy. A queen of Bologna—not mentioned in history—refuses to bend under the Pontifical yoke; beautiful and pleasure-loving, enamoured of her independence, she recognises no law save her caprice, no rule save her passions. Like Sardou's *Theodora*, she falls in love with a gentle and amiable adventurer, who is ignorant of her real rank; she learns that he proposes to avenge on the queen the death of his brother, of which she is accused, and in a magnificent scene she offers herself, defenceless and alone, to her lover's dagger, who recognises his idolised mistress in the accursed Fiammetta. This is but one facet of his talent. In *La Première Maîtresse* he takes the reader into the abyss of degradation to which illicit love sinks; in *Jupe Courte* he plays with Anacreontic subjects as lightly as the libellula hovering over a poisonous marsh. From the *Contes Épiques*, with their heroic clang, to the metaphysical *Hesperus*; from the *Midnight Sun*, with pictures of boreal

splendour and scarlet snows, to *Pagode*, evoking immemorial Hindoo divinities, with the resonance of deep gongs and wild incantations ; from *Soirs Moroses*, with their wailing lament over the hopeless pain of doubt and suspicion, Catulle Mendès has struck every chord of his lyre with a master's hand, and sung in burning strophes his hymn, perverse or pure, to beauty and love. And, after all, his work has not been all reprehensible or abominable ; here and there he has scattered pearls, and written pages that need raise no blushes ; among these must be counted a great number of the " Little Legends," *Le Crime du Vieux Blas*, and later yet his fine novel of *La Grande Maguet*, which appeared in the *Figaro* in 1889, a powerful character study set in a tale of weird superstition and half-insane passion.

In a volume published three years ago, Catulle Mendès, who was a great friend and is an ardent admirer of Wagner, published his impressions on each of the Maestro's works ; he had so com-

pletely assimilated the thoughts, intentions and creeds of the poet-composer, he had identified himself so thoroughly with his genius, that this book, evidently hurriedly penned, will remain in the immense number of those written on Wagnerism as the most faithful record of the ideas that emanated from the mysterious mind of the author of the *Nibelungen*.

Albeit a prolific writer, Mendès finds time to be a man of the world. He is a graceful, polished, witty, and yet spontaneous talker; he is quick to resent an unguarded word and construe it into an offence when it touches his literary convictions, and has more than once avenged the criticism of a journalistic article, sword in hand. His most memorable duels were the one he fought with Octave Mirbeau, the critic, once his friend and admirer, on the banks of the Seine many years ago; and another following on a press conflict, when he met Léon Bienvenu in the woods of Viroflay, and wounded him severely in the right arm. In private life,



THE
BOSTON-LIBRARY
SOCIETY

GEORGES OHNET.

1997

WAGE-RELATED

ISSUES

however, the poet is neither touchy nor quarrelsome, and he has a large circle of friends who bear testimony to the geniality of his disposition.

He will probably have few imitators; contemporaries have accepted him, such as he is, as a unique interpreter of a unique form of art, and posterity will endorse the verdict, although his works are not those which appeal to popularity with the masses, or can be placed with impunity in all hands. He writes neither for immature youth, nor, in justice to him be it said, to pander to the grosser appetites of the crowd, but for a few *fins connaisseurs*, who can appreciate alike pungent condiments and delicate flavouring, who can forgive the poet's sensuousness in his eloquent imagery, and derive exquisite enjoyment, not from the questionable subject, but from the unrivalled manipulation of a language that had such masters as Rabelais, Montaigne, and Victor Hugo.

V.

Georges Ohnet—What the critics object to and the readers like—His recipe for novels—He begins as a dramatist—*Le Maître de Forge* refused unanimously—Its ultimate success—Ohnet's life—His character—*Serge Panine*—*Le Docteur Rameau*—Ohnet's popularity—Hector Malot—Accepted in England—Taine praises his first book—How *Sans Famille* was written—His retreat at Fontenay aux Bois—*Madame Obernin*—*Conscience*—*Mondaine*—*Vices Français*—*English Portraits*—Zola's judgment on Malot.

THE world of letters has been somewhat severe on M. Georges Ohnet, which has not, however, prevented him from being a successful novelist in France, and a more than ordinarily popular one abroad, possibly on account of the very shortcomings that excited the criticism of the modern French school. It is not likely that *Le Grande Marnière* or *Lise Fleuron* will live in the future as classical representative French novels; there is little in them, as in several others of Ohnet's books, to attract the dilettanti of originality,

the amateurs of hyper-refined phraseology, or the lovers of psychological observation expressed in carefully elaborated sentences; but outside this critical minority there is another and more numerous public who receives the couple of volumes Ohnet writes every year with genuine gratification. In ardent, feverish Paris even, there exist a considerable number of good honest folk who come home from shop or office, vaguely longing for a little recreation, and a larger majority of women, anxious to escape from the *ennui* of their leisures. All these prefer that the novels they take up to beguile the time should be written as simply as possible, that they should amuse without fatigue, be sufficiently romantic and interesting to appeal to a mild sentimentality; plain and practical enough not to startle their common sense, trouble their minds, or disturb their equanimity. If there is love in the story, and the *dénouement* is a happy one, they are supremely indifferent to a real or fancied likeness in the plot to those

of Jules Sandeau and Octave Feuillet. If the characters speak as they would on the stage ; if the heroine is "very pale, but rarely beautiful ;" if the hero is "tall, correct, and supremely elegant ;" if the tale begins with a misunderstanding that causes separation and unspeakable agony ; if it concludes with reconciliation and bliss ;—nothing further is required from the author.

Georges Ohnet is fully aware of these predilections, and has acted upon them. He is very much of the opinion expressed one day by the late and regretted Labiche, who, after listening to five hundred lines in which Zola described a thunderstorm, said quietly : "I can't write novels, but if I could I think I should simply have put down, instead of the five hundred lines, 'a fearful storm broke over Paris,' and gone on with the story."

It is chiefly through action that Ohnet's novels live ; to it he sacrifices all else, and therein lies the real secret of his continued success, and of

the horror with which the analysts contemplate him. It is unjust and unfair to judge him from any other point of view than the one he frankly admits; his works must be considered as a whole, and not gauged by half a dozen pages taken at random. He began to write on the principle that an author can achieve a great and legitimate reputation by addressing himself to a given portion of the general public in precisely the terms in which it prefers to be spoken to; logically, and not without modesty, he has thought more of his contemporaries than of posterity; and that he has not erred is proved by the fact that his novels reach on an average a hundred and fifty and two hundred editions. Ohnet is therefore absolutely justified in writing for those who read, and not for those who criticise.

The recipe of the author of *Serge Panine* is simple and wholesome. He conceives a plot, sprinkles into it fascinating heroes born in the higher classes, almost always noble, and infinitely

more noble when they spring from the people; lovely proud heroines, who are apparently haughty and wicked, but generally turn out the reverse. Then perseveringly, and with the happiest results, he proceeds to show how important a part young engineers and young notaries play in society; he produces them as the conquerors of a new world, in which, however, the remaining scions of an ancient aristocracy move with majestic dignity.

This far-seeing and practical novelist began his literary career as a playwright. His first contributions to the stage were *Regina Scarpi*, a drama, and *Marthe*, a comedy. Both contained unmistakable qualities, but as yet gave no premonition of the success afterwards achieved by Ohnet. His tastes and sympathies were at that time exclusively for dramatic literature; he set to work to write a third play, *Le Maître de Forge*, and was so pleased with it that he entertained no doubts of having it accepted at once. He was doomed, however, to long dis-

appointments, and to the heart-sickness of much deferred hope. The manager to whom he first brought the comedy expressed himself delighted with its structure and development, but confessed himself alarmed at the delicate situation on which it turned, and, after deliberating with his company, declined it. Others did the same.

Ohnet is obstinate; instead of being discouraged by this rejection, he determined to try a circuitous route to the same end, and wrote a novel, *Serge Panine*. To his dismay he found the publishers as reluctant to take the book as the managers had been to receive the play; some refused it at once, others kept the manuscript for months, but eventually returned it with thanks. At last Abraham Dreyfus, who was kindly disposed towards the young beginner, undertook to offer and recommend the novel to the great publishing firm of Ollendorff, who not only agreed to read it, but immediately consented to give a good price to the author. It

attracted the attention of the Academy by the encomiums it received, and Ohnet received the prize of Jouy. In pursuance of his secret intentions, he converted *Serge Panine* into a play, which was accepted at the Gymnase in the beginning of the year 1882; perfectly staged and acted, it enjoyed a long run.

The days of doubt and anxiety were over. On the strength of the hundred editions through which *Serge Panine* had rapidly ran, Ollendorff asked Ohnet for another novel on even more advantageous terms; the author saw his long-looked for chance, and re-wrote *La Maître de Forge* as a book, which appeared first in the feuilleton of the *Figaro*, and proved in the end one of the most surprising successes of the age. M. Köning, excited by the wonderful pecuniary results of *Serge Panine* in its dramatic form, persuaded Ohnet to perform the same transformation on the *Ironmaster*, and the once rejected comedy was received enthusiastically by the *tout Paris* of the theatres. Nevertheless,

Georges Ohnet had found his true vocation, and did not rest on his freshly gathered laurels ; book followed book in rapid succession. *Les Dames de Croix Mort* and *Lise Fleuron* showed signs of steady improvement and greater power, while *Volonté* is decidedly superior to both.

Born in Paris in 1848, he is barely forty-two years old, and has the nervous vivacity, petulance, and suppleness of the true Parisian to an extraordinary degree. He is short, lithe, active, passionately fond of all kinds of sport and exercise, fishing, shooting, fencing, walking and swimming. His conversation is lively and sparkling, his dark eyes flash, his smile is expressive and slightly cynical, his speech quick and racy. Unlike many of his literary colleagues, Ohnet has enough respect for the beauty of the French language not to stretch it on a rack and torture it into expressions as extravagant as they are incorrect ; he is simple, grammatical, and unaffected. He believes, like Rivarol, that *Le*

Français a une probité attachée à ses moindres mots. His satire is never ill-natured, and although he can be sentimental and even pathetic, the essence of his nature is a joyous frankness. His parents destined him for the law, but he soon abandoned a profession, in which he felt he would cut a poor figure, for journalism, and succeeded Nestor Roqueplan as dramatic critic to the important and influential paper, *Le Constitutionnel*, making himself the champion of the new school and the advocate of youthful playwrights, and thereby fostering the latent desire he had to step into their ranks. Always intensely sociable, he goes out a great deal during the winter, which he spends in Paris; but as soon as the early spring tips the city trees with green, he hurries back to *Les Abymes*, his country house in the Department of Seine et Maine. But whether he is rusticating in the fresh summer air, or staying in his little house of the Avenue Trudaine, Ohnet devotes the morning to hard steady work; it can almost

be said that the late hours which he spends in leisure, social diversion, or intercourse with his neighbours, are but a continuation of the same labour, for his mind is always-alert, his perceptions acute, and he studies his characters *sur le rif*, rarely introducing one in his novels that has not unconsciously sat to him for his portrait. He has been blamed for laying the scene of his stories chiefly in the *bourgeoisie*, but it is, on the contrary, to his credit that he writes of a class to the higher order of which he belongs, and is therefore best acquainted with.

Ohnet has sometimes revolved the plot of a story in his mind for months, even for years. By slow degrees the situations are evolved, the *dénouement* prepared, the characters shaped; a sudden illumination will reveal a scene or an action, but it is only when the whole has become clear, logical, and harmonious that the manuscript is commenced. It may be that the process of incubation of his next work is even then taking place in his active brain, yet all the pre-

paration and forethought does not exonerate him from nervous trepidation when the hour comes of launching a new book or a new play. His conscientiousness takes alarm at the thought that he has not done his best to satisfy the public, and his genuine modesty is slow to believe in deserved approval.

In my estimation, *Serge Panine*, with *Le Docteur Rameau* and *Le Dernier Amour*, are Ohnet's best and most powerful novels.

In the first, Micheline Desvarennès, the daughter of the rich baker's widow, marries, in opposition to her mother's wish, Prince Serge, a Polish fortune-hunter, who has loved and been beloved by Jeanne de Cernay, Micheline's adopted sister. Forsaken and betrayed, the latter consents to become a banker's wife, but unable to accomplish her sacrifice to the end she refuses to follow him on her wedding-day, and confesses her secret to Madame Desvarennès. The *boulangère* implores her to respect Micheline's wedded happiness and to fly—but in vain: Jeanne suc-

cumbs once more to the fascinations of Prince Serge Panine, is denounced to her husband, who refuses to avenge himself, and Serge, unfaithful to his duties, engaged in dishonourable speculation, having caused the ruin of the honest home he has entered, is about to fly in disgrace, when Madame Desvarennnes shoots him dead to save him from open shame, and allows it to be thought that he has had the grace to commit suicide. The character which gives the novel its literary merit is that of the mother, a *maîtresse femme*, a bourgeoisie of sterling uncompromising honesty, who has judged her son-in-law at a glance, given him a chance, and, finding him utterly unworthy, suppresses him with relentless justice. Born of the people, trade and labour have made her rich; her contempt for the weak, useless, voluptuous Polish nobleman is composed of pride and indignation; the empress of the baker's shop is incapable of understanding the gentleman who can neither earn money nor spend her daughter's dowry decently, and she cannot see why he

should live. She is an admirably conceived type, admirably carried out, and as a type will survive Ohnet's other creations.

Le Docteur Rameau betrays an involuntary adoption of philosophical speculations and more psychological tendency than Ohnet's earlier works, but the author of *Le Maître de Forge* still abstains from disguising them under the wordy metaphors or scientific technicalities which so frequently nowadays compel the reader to peruse a novel with a dictionary in his other hand. A *savant*, a physician, a naturalist, and an atheist marries a young girl of Spanish origin, deeply imbued with religion and even superstition, scrupulously faithful to the most insignificant observances of her creed. A struggle begins between the pair; the wife attempts to convince her husband that God is everywhere, while he tries to persuade her that the Deity does not exist. The weaker mind succumbs. Conchita wavers, hesitates, and when the strong staff on which she blindly leant crumbles under her

vacillating touch, she stumbles and falls into the arms of Docteur Rameau's trusted friend. She petulantly declares to the disinterested adviser, who holds forth a warning and helping hand, that she is not sinning according to the new lights shown by Docteur Rameau himself—that right is no longer right, and wrong no longer wrong; and that she is only applying his audacious theories and shaking off the trammels he has scoffed at. “If there is a culprit, it is my husband,” she exclaims.

The Doctor's spotless life, his real hidden love for Conchita, do not avail him; we vaguely feel that the Spanish woman's arguments are powerful, and that he has edified nothing solid on the ruins he made. Munzel the lover, a foreigner, is mortally wounded during the war, and it is the friend he has betrayed who is hastily summoned to his deathbed.

“‘Munzel will die,’ he says to his wife.

“She retorted hastily :

“‘Have you told your friend that he must im-

plore God to rescue him? Have you told him that his life is in danger, and that the hour has come when he must save his soul? Have you summoned a priest to his bedside? Have you thought of all that—say?’

“‘I have,’ answered Rameau.

“‘Well, and what are you going to do, then?’

“‘To let him pass away quietly.’

“‘You will send him to eternal damnation!’

“‘If Munzel appears before a supreme Judge, he will have nothing to fear from His wrath. He has lived a blameless life; he can die in peace.’

“At these words Conchita stood up, terrible, the horror of a guilty memory in her eyes.

“‘And how do you know?’ she gasped.”

The situation, so strong in itself, is free from all extraneous detail; the action leads, the author follows it.

Munzel dies; the partner of his guilt does not long survive him—she expires in the arms of the great physician, who once again records



VICTOR CHERBULIEZ.

100
100

100 ; 100
100 ; 100
100 ; 100



THE
BOSTON-LIBRARY
SOCIETY

VICTOR CHERBULIEZ.

ЭБТ
УРАЛ-БОТОН
УЛС

that science is but an empty name. She leaves a child, which is Munzel's ; the Doctor cherishes the girl with all the love he had lavished on her mother, and there the powerful dramatic interest of the story centres. Obdurate in his unbelief in happiness, before the simple piety of the child kneeling at the altar, the bereaved atheist's pride melts when he sees her, pale and beautiful, lying in the bier in her virginal shroud ; from the white motionless face a flash of faith pierces his humbled heart, and he no longer doubts. The gradations by which this revolution is accomplished are perfectly modulated, and the *dénouement* comes without a shock, and as an indisputable solution.

Dernier Amour, Ohnet's last novel, breathes a warmer passion, as if in his maturity he was more alive to keen human sensations than in his earlier youth ; but even then he does not allow himself a single word that can alarm respectable susceptibilities.

The two or three episodes in *La Comtesse Sarah*

in which he has departed slightly from the demure propriety of his manner, are treated with so much discretion and so delicate a sense of what is due to blushing womanhood, that it would be invidious to single them as blemishes on a wholly blameless work.

The year 1890 ended badly for Ohnet. Ill advised or too hopeful he dramatised *Dernier Amour*, and of the great qualities and serious defects of the novel only the latter were prominent in the play. Not all the talent of the excellent company of the Gymnase, the clever staging, the wish to be lenient to an author who had deserved well of the public, could soften the condemnation of the critics, and it was not disputed by the audience. The play ran, or rather crawled, for ten nights, and then died without further struggle. But, despite this radical failure, there exists a feeling that Ohnet's talent is more matured than it was, and that for having made *fausse route* he has not the less a better chance now of reaching the

higher goal, if he perseveres in striving for dramatic fame.

In summing up George Ohnet's qualifications as a writer of fiction, the impartial judgment must be that his novels are interesting and attractive to the majority of those who habitually read light literature, that women especially delight in them, with the consciousness that their partiality is one which they can openly confess, while at the same time they satisfy a perfectly avowable aspiration towards sentiment and idealised love. In this respect they can lay claim to a superiority over the works of the contemporary novelist who more closely resembles the author of *Serge Panine*—Hector Malot.

Abroad, and especially with Anglo-Saxon readers, M. Hector Malot enjoys great favour; in France he is classed among the *littérateurs* of high rank; but is his popularity, however genuine, not somewhat of the nature of a *succès d'estime*? The author of *Sans Famille*—for through long

years he is still best known under that title—is universally acknowledged to be an exceptionally moral writer; strait-laced respectability has recognised in him an exception to the intolerable levity of his countrymen, and admitted him almost without protest on a par with the most proper British novelists. This wholesale adoption may have its dangers, although in no case very alarming ones; and it must also be confessed that, in spite of the honourable confidence reposed in Hector Malot's works in this country, the reading public secretly prefers his less scrupulous fellow-writers, with something of the unavowed feeling which makes theatre-goers, if they *do* go and see a French play, select the dramas of Sardou and the naughty plays of Blum and Touché instead of the impeccable *Abbé Constantin* of Halévy, or *L'Ami Fritz* of Erckmann-Chatrian. Where hundreds of Zola's books are rapidly sold, Malot's are purchased in units; they are languidly read and set aside with commendation no doubt, but without enthusiasm.

It is a great and laudable quality to be very moral a greater one to be thought so; but whoever writes for fame and profit, and not only for a wholesome popularity, has been tempted to forsake the path of righteousness, to sacrifice to false gods at least once in his life, and found the transgression practically more advantageous than the observance of the higher tenets. This is why Daudet wrote *Sapho*, and Hector Malot *Les Vices Français*.

These admissions, however candid, are not intended to detract from the sterling merits of a conscientious and decidedly clever writer, as they have not prevented him from conquering all his grades in the army of French men of letters with the numerous volumes he has contributed to fiction during the last twenty years. Norman by birth, he had been intended by his prudent and cautious father for a notary's career, a hereditary one in the family, affording a modest but secure competence; Hector rebelled at a lifelong perspective of endless wills and con-

tracts to be drawn up, and, forsaking the paternal office, wandered away to Paris. Malot the elder was wrathful and unforgiving, the mother wept, but secretly sent her recalcitrant son her meagre savings, that helped him to eke out a precarious livelihood. Hector Malot's chief resources were derived from the horticultural articles he contributed to a periodical edited by M. Jules Simon, and the many spare hours this occupation left him were devoted to more congenial literary efforts. Suddenly, in 1862, an extraordinary good fortune befell him. M. Taine, waiting in a friend's library who happened to come late to an appointment, mechanically took up a book lying on the table and turned over the pages; he became interested, glanced at the title—*Victimes d'Amour*, by H. Malot—and finally carried away the volume. The author was absolutely unknown to him, yet the next day he wrote a notice of the novel in the *Journal des Débats* in such eulogistic terms, that the director of the paper shortly after summoned

the hitherto ignored young man, and asked him to write a *feuilleton* for him. From that hour his future opened brightly and hopefully; he could look back with a smile on the past days when he was in turns a journalist, the secretary of an Imperialist senator, the systematically repulsed postulant in editorial offices, and piteously poor. In due time *Le Beau Frère* appeared in *Les Débats*, and then novel followed upon novel without interruption; Malot was already spoken of as a writer of promise, and could make his own terms; but the decisive story which was to change him from a fairly successful author to a widely popular one had not yet been written. *Sans Famille* achieved the transformation.

Although the simple pathetic tale was crowned by the Academy, although it has been translated in every modern tongue and become familiar in every land, few are aware how it was written. Malot had not intended *Sans Famille* for publication, but for the private amusement of his

daughter, then a child, now a lovely girl of twenty. He added a few pages to the story every day when his other work was done; it grew apace during the long winter evenings, and as each chapter was concluded he read it aloud to the family conclave, to which a very few intimate friends were admitted. These delighted auditors forced it into publicity by compelling the modest author to send the complete work to his editors.

Malot was surprised beyond expression at its immediate celebrity. What Taine had done for *Victimes d'Amour*, Cuvillier Fleury did for *Sans Famille*; he brought it under the notice of the Academy, proposed it for the highest award, and made Malot send it in. Octave Feuillet was selected to report upon its merits, and did so with such eloquence that the *Prix Monthyon* was unanimously given to the author. He was gratified, but not unduly elated; he continued to work laboriously and perseveringly on the lines he had marked out for himself. He intro-

duced—or, to speak more accurately, he restored *la jeune fille* to a prominent place in fiction, and lingered lovingly on his girlish portraits. If reminiscences of former treatment occasionally occur, if his horizon is limited, his canvas of moderate dimensions, yet the setting and development are always fresh and not unfrequently original.

When Malot has fairly started his characters, he never leaves them; he does not write what in French is called *une page*—that is, a chapter of description or considerations not strictly bearing on the story. If he does not soar very high or very far, he does not wing his flight in one direction only; his area, if circumscribed in extent, is varied enough to please all tastes; and whatever region he explores, he does so honestly and conscientiously. His characters are of many types and many races; he places them in military circles, as in *Le Lieutenant Bonnet*, a pleasant and graphic picture of garrison life in a southern town; or in gambling circles,

where his heroes pay dearly for their vices; he shows us the practical calculating woman and the wandering *Saltimbanque*, the frivolous society belle and, in *l'Auberge du Monde*, the lifelike sketches of the Universal Exhibition of 1878. *Micheline* renewed the success of *Sans Famille*, and *Madame Obernin*, which appeared in 1870, has been called by many his best character study.

Hector Malot dislikes society, shuns it obstinately, and lives a secluded home-life; he belongs to no *coterie*, solicits no favours, claims kinship with no school, is devoid of ambition, vanity, conceit, and the *soif de paraître*, so common a weakness in modern celebrities. He built himself a house at Fontenay aux Bois, and spends the greater part of his existence in that sylvan retreat, in the restful peace of a sage. The years glide swiftly and gently in this happy home; he has at his side two loving and devoted women, his daughter by a first marriage, and his second wife, whose father was an aristocratic

artist; they have cheerfully accepted the isolation and solitude which is necessary to the fruition of the novelist's talent, and share it with him untempted by the seductions of Paris, whose busy hum might almost be heard in their silent hermitage. These three recluses have realised the ideal of domestic bliss: labour of the man, devotion of the wife, affection of the daughter.

During ten months of the year at Fontenay aux Bois Malot works ten hours a day, only laying down his pen to take long walks in the forest; after dinner the little party meet in his study, and he reads aloud to his wife and daughter what he has written, inviting their criticism, and relying on their judgment. He is hardly ever seen in the city, and only rare visitors are bidden to the house; but in July, when excursionists, pleasure-seekers, and picnic parties begin to invade the leafy solitudes around his little domain, he takes wing, and travels in the provinces or in Switzerland till

the enemy has withdrawn and he can return in safety.

It is not possible to analyse all, or even a greater portion, of Malot's literary work, nor would it be desirable. Such novels as *Sans Famille* and *Micheline* are too well known to require a detailed notice; others are not characteristic enough to reveal any special personality of the author; some are perhaps hardly deserving of special mention; and it is therefore my intention to speak more particularly only of those that have marked a distinct stage in his career, and which are not, I believe, as familiar to the English public.

Madame Obernin is an episode in the life of a woman of the world, holding a prominent position at Strasbourg; it had been uneventful till the arrival on the scene of a young law student, Robert, who, saturated with Balzac's novels, falls in love with her at first sight, and sees in her his *Lys dans la Vallée*. Beloved by a young and intelligent husband, Madame Obernin, in a

spirit of cold, narrow coquetry, not only encourages the passion of the young man, but lets him believe that she returns it. Too practical to imperil the advantages and security of her conjugal status, she compels him to carry on this intrigue with the utmost prudence, and to descend to the most humiliating stratagems. Her influence on Robert is such that he silences his honour, and consents to all his imperious mistress requires of him. When M. Obernin dies, he hopes to earn his reward and make the widow his wife. She hesitates, temporises, argues, and asks for a delay ; the interviews between the two are some of the best pages Malot has ever written, and prepare the reader for the final decision of Madame Obernin, who throws over her lover for an old general, on whom she bestows her person and immense fortune, the second husband being evidently predestined to the same fate as the first. Robert, half mad with rage and despair, rushes off to the colonies, where he eventually marries a wealthy creole.

Madame Obernin is a roman intime ; the girl heroine has given place to the married woman, the *ingéune* to the hard coquette. The characters are well understood and firmly drawn, but the book bears traces of hasty writing ; excisions might have been advantageously made, and even accessory figures dispensed with, and Malot has not sufficiently disguised his intention of exposing a certain unsettled state of the female mind which during a period of thirty years has been at the root of most conjugal disasters. This inability to conceal his motive is a serious fault, for it always pleases the reader to draw his own conclusions, to find out the moral or decipher the lesson ; it irritates him to have the teachings presented in such a fashion that he is from the onset deprived of the initiative of discovery.

Eighteen years after *Madame Obernin*, following on a long series of stories of unequal interest, *Conscience* appeared. The scene has entirely changed. Malot relates the mental conflicts and the material facts in the life of a man who, son

of a peasant, is near enough to Nature's brutality to harbour the instincts of crime, but learned enough in philosophical and scientific education to know that if the crime is skilfully committed he has as little to fear from the law as from his own remorse, for he denies the existence of a conscience. Saniel, a doctor of great and deserved repute, is placed in the alternative of murdering a fellow-creature or being branded as inexpressibly mean. His pride revolts against the latter; his principles absolve assassination. The foul deed is done, he grows rich, famous, honoured; but to his astonishment he begins to experience inexplicable sensations that disturb his equanimity. In the presence of the woman he loves he alone finds alleviation to these disturbing symptoms; but after a time even that last safeguard fails him. Secure against detection or retribution at human hands, his imagination conjures up the accusing spirits of the dead, and he becomes his own judge and their avenger. In the carefully analytic development

of this situation—handled in another form by Zola in *Therèse Raquin*—lies the whole plot. Malot has revealed himself in *Conscience* as a writer at once idealistic and realistic, and his style unconsciously bears the impress of this double influence.

Mondaine (1888) is not as didactic, nor is it a counsel's brief; it is the plain statement of moral abasement and the means by which nature restores a lost equilibrium. A young nobleman has given his name and title to the wealthy daughter of a plebeian contractor: love was, however, the chief factor in the marriage, and the young couple began life with every chance of happiness; but the wife, dazzled, intoxicated by the brilliancy of her position, plunges recklessly into every amusement, exists for society alone, and forgets all else. In vain her adoring husband endeavours to win from her some token of affection and restore her to common sense, the vortex of frivolity has irretrievably engulfed her. Sadly he tells

his father-in-law of his disappointment and fading hopes :

“In all things, great or small, moral and material, of heart or soul, I gave myself to her unreservedly. In our outward life I have been successful in pleasing her ; by initiating her to the customs of our world I have interested her. But for the rest I only weary her. When I tried to make her read, or read to her what might touch the spark I yearned to ignite, she yawned, and the books were set aside for ever. She knows only two theatres—*Les Française* (on Tuesdays, not on Thursdays) ; and the *Opéra* (on Monday, not Wednesday). Seated in her box, she has eyes only for the dresses around her and the glasses admiringly levelled at her face ; she has ears only for the silly gossip whispered to her about the men and women present ; the music and poetry of the stage are dead letters to her. When we travelled, the beauty of art in monuments, pictures, and statues, did not appeal to her ;

Nature had no charms if we wandered through woods and mountains together. She is worldly—nothing but worldly; she must have her person, her gowns, her fortune, her hotel, her carriages talked about, accept homage whoever offers it, show herself wherever it is *chic* to be seen; have a court, live in public day and night—her whole life is made up of that.”

Gabrielle was not created for maternity, and in her folly stoops to the guilt of averting it. Her husband, unable to endure any longer the existence she leads, seeks refuge in a distant studio, where, under the name of Geoffroy, he leads a double life. A gentle, tender, young girl, whom he has befriended and who knows him only as a painter on enamel, soothes his sorrow, brings sunshine to his heart, fans his ambition, and under her loving and fostering influence he becomes a great artist. A divorce—the modern solution of all the difficulties of fiction—will, it is hinted, bring about a happy *dénouement* and satisfy conventional morality.

Mondaine is another facet of Hector Malot's talent, and he has struck a new vein with a fearlessness not habitual to him.

What shall we say of *Vices Français*, that preceded *Mondaine* by a year, and while purporting to relate a deplorable incident in the private life of a public man, is the first *roman de mœurs Anglaises* issued from the pen of a French novelist? It is no indiscretion now to write what the press openly said at the time of its appearance, and was not denied by the author; to state plainly what was whispered then even by those least initiated to the mysteries of a *roman à clef*; and, removing the ineffectual mask, to call the characters by their real names. Hector Malot, assuming the right to trade on personalities and—the word will out—on scandal, was well qualified to write such a book, having lived long in England, and being, moreover, fully convinced that *Vices Français* was a pleasing euphemism specially applicable to thoroughly British errors.

The hero of the novel, supposed to be Sir Charles Dilke, was described as follows, under the name of Robert Mostyn :

“ Mostyn often sat down to his work without changing his fencing costume, which, to say the truth, showed him at his best. No tailor’s suit ever so masterfully cut, could have more advantageously set off the splendid breadth of his bust, the lissome grace of his tall figure, than the simple linen vest whose whiteness threw into fine relief his handsome face, with its regular features and placid expression framed in a long pointed beard.”

Jane Talbot is Lady Dilke herself,* and on the same authority all the members of the Cabinet are passed in review.

First in order comes Watson (Gladstone):

“ Passionately enamoured of a power he had wielded so long and never relinquished without pain, very autocratic, but also profoundly artful

* Her book of short stories, *The Shrine of Death*, has been published in French.

and slightly bombastic, old Watson had not seen without uneasiness this young man growing up beside him and gaining an influence that annoyed him. . . . He talks incessantly of retiring, but he will talk about it till his last day, no one but himself believing in his abdication."

Of Thompson (Mr. Chamberlain) Mostyn is made to say :

"John Thompson is the most upright man I ever met in my political career ; he is always a man of his word, and absolutely to be depended upon . . . quick, alert, glad to live, confident in his strength, smartly dressed in well-fitting new clothes, trim and stylish, with a rose in his button-hole."

A striking contrast to Abourne (Lord Roseberry) :

"Sharp, distrustful, never uttering a word or taking a step without pondering whether he will not imperil his future or compromise his ambition, he spends his life in seeking how he can demolish Mostyn in order to inherit his position,

and reckons as much on his wife's money as on his cleverness to conquer the leadership of his party."

Vere (Vernon Harcourt) is not forgotten :

"With a warmly effusive manner, Vere has a deep-seated caution which makes him almost pusillanimous in the choice of his acquaintance. Married to the daughter of a man enriched in the foulard silk trade (?) he has found great difficulty in introducing her into society, and some houses were still closed to her. In the Mostyn affair it behoved him to be doubly circumspect, first for his own sake, and secondly for his wife's. However strong his friendship for Mostyn had been in the past, he could not now afford to offend Watson, and at the same time render his wife's status still more uncertain by upholding a cause already as compromised as it was compromising."

Last, not least, in the portrait-gallery comes Morgan (the Marquis of Hartington), type of the sceptical *roué* statesman :

“Of all the Ministers, with the exception of Thompson, he was the only one who acted towards Mostyn as he had always done since they had sat together in the House. That Mostyn should be the object of a dishonouring accusation was a matter of absolute indifference to him; he never gave it a thought, caring nothing whether the charge was justified or not, or whether Robert would be convicted or triumphantly acquitted. It concerned him infinitely less than the success of his yacht at the Cowes regatta. Indeed, these matters were of as little account in his eyes as politics. Had he been told that Mostyn might suffer severely from this charge, he would have been genuinely surprised. ‘What! Mostyn made miserable by such a trifle? Then he is not nearly the clever man I thought him.’”

Other minor personalities were ruthlessly stripped of their transparent pseudonyms; Balson was Sir James Hannen; Mills, Sir Charles Parkes Butt, and so on, *ad infinitum*. Hector

Malot had chosen a true incident, placed it in the necessary authentic surroundings, and added what he deemed indispensable to the artistic construction of an amusing novel. That such liberty should be granted to a writer, and tolerated in literature, has always seemed to me the greatest wrong inflicted on society, a blot on fiction, and the weak and culpable pandering to the lowest and least excusable form of idle curiosity.

When Hector Malot lent his pen to such a cause in the new departure of *Vices Français*, he added nothing to his reputation as a man of letters, while in the eyes of many impartial critics at home and abroad the attempt was calculated to dim his *prestige*. It has fortunately, and to his credit, not been repeated, for he could only have imperilled the judgment passed on him many years ago, as far back as 1866, in the *Figaro*.

“Hector Malot, an independent son of Balzac, has donned the white apron of the anatomist

who dissects every fibre of the human animal, stretched out in its nudity on the marble slab of the amphitheatre. In his case, the human animal is alive. He does not question a dead organism, he interrogates life in the soul and the palpitating flesh. On the stone, instead of a corpse probed by the scalpel, lies the warm body of a man palpitating with passion, and yielding his innermost secrets with every gesture and every word."

These lines were signed by Emile Zola, and laid on the author of whom they were written a heavy inheritance of responsibility, of which he must at no time prove himself unworthy.

VI.

Victor Cherbuliez—His school—His novitiate in Geneva—The ruling influences on his talent—A novel of mystery—*Le Roman d'une Honnête Femme*, &c. &c.—*Ladislas Bolski*—*Samuel Brohl et Compagnie*—Octave Feuillet—His detractors—His position at the Court of Napoleon III.—*M. de Camors*—The death of his son—*Honneur d'Artiste*, his last book—His death, December 1890.

IF Octave Feuillet, in spite of advanced years, was not still an active worker, M. Victor Cherbuliez would undoubtedly stand at the head of that idealistic school whose characteristic tendencies may be distinguished as embodying a conservative opposition in literature. This school, which can only be called idealistic in contradiction with the realistic and materialistic groups, recognised as its masters Musset, Georges Sand, and Jules Sandeau; it has ever been more preoccupied with sentiments than with characters; it aims at being more pleasantly conciliating than truth-

fully bitter; it excels in veiled lights and dwells in preference on noble and triumphant virtue, rather than on gross unredeemed vice. Less virile perhaps than its rivals, it has greater seductions, and exercises a wider fascination, an easily explained circumstance in a century where women alone have enough leisure to read; it possesses for the critic the added superiority of never recklessly wounding public taste, never wearying by exaggerated lyrism or alarming by unexpected innovations of style.

Victor Cherbuliez had the good fortune not to grow up under the eyes of the crowd; he appeared before his readers when his talent was already matured, without having exposed to the brunt of censure those earlier efforts which it is often difficult to recall, or are at best reserved to the chilly honour of a *succès d'estime*. Either because chance favoured him, or because his instincts prompted him judiciously, he went through his novitiate in silence and shadow; it

was, however, none the less laborious or prolonged for its obscurity, and he has given a wholesome example to the young generation of novelists and dramatists who assert that too much study dulls the imaginative faculties.

Cherbuliez enjoyed other advantages. He belonged to a family whose literary tastes were traditional and inherited, and he was born at Geneva, where all the roads of civilisation meet ; where France, Italy, and Germany cross hands on neutral ground ; a city which, notwithstanding its old and strictly Calvinistic atmosphere, is of all intellectual centres the most felicitously placed to produce unfettered minds and a cosmopolitan imagination. Nowhere can the various motors of mental activity have wider play or be more readily studied. There Protestantism is with some as intolerant as Calvin, with others, as broad as Servet ; a step beyond the narrow territory—for Geneva is nearly the whole Canton—Savoy harbours Catholicism alike in its most exalted and most sceptical forms.

There is fought the eternal battle between the two opposite ways of understanding liberty—the old and the new; there the ancient municipal autonomy still flourishes side by side with the great modern centralised democracies, and from this point of vantage the observant spectator can embrace at a glance past and present civilisations. Nature has contributed her share; she is at Geneva both smiling and majestic; lake and mountain, eternal snows and vine-clad slopes, turbulent rivers and verdant shores, afford delight to the dreamer and studies to the artist.

To the propitious and combined influences of birthplace and nationality may be traced the independence of thought of M. Cherbuliez, which is the slow, gradual, and natural consequence of his education and his life. He was, moreover, lucky in being a pupil of Rodolphe Töppfer, Professor of Belles Lettres, the charming original writer and illustrator of the immortal *Voyages en Zig-zag*, the delight of successive

generations. Constant intercourse with such a man, who had taken a great fancy to him, could not fail to be beneficial to young Cherbuliez; the effect was strong and lasting. When he left College, he did not interrupt his studies or discontinue his researches into the workings of the human mind; he came to Paris, and devoted himself ardently to the teachings of Eugène Burnouf; he learnt Sanskrit, haunted the Museum of the Louvre, the picture galleries and the theatres. Then he went to Bonn, where he became imbued with Hegel's philosophy. He tarried long in the old University, and has retained of that period of his life an imperishable remembrance. It was there, no doubt, that sprang up the first germs of *Count Kostia*, the scene of which is laid in the old Rheinland.

Still intent on his moral elevation, on the development of his intellectual powers, and the perfect training of his faculties, Cherbuliez worked incessantly. He had determined to spend to the last farthing for the furtherance of

his purpose, a small inheritance that had befallen him, and successively visited France, Germany, Italy, Asia Minor, Constantinople, and Greece. Each of these journeys bore fruit at the appointed time, in a thorough comprehension of the types introduced in his books, and a realistic description of scenery. *Causeries Athéniennes* were born in Greece; *Le Prince Vitali* in Italy; *Le Roman d'une Honnête Femme* is the outcome of French experiences; *Ladislas Bolski* has the mingled exaltation, passion, and calculating coldness of the Muscovite and the Slav; while *Paule Merée* and *Holda Metenis* are pregnant with a Swiss atmosphere.

The latter appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, followed closely in the same publication by *Le Comte Kostia*, *L'Idée de Jean Tetrol*, &c., all meeting with a flattering reception. The Academy, justly alarmed at the audacious encroachments of the revolutionary naturalist writers, gladly opened its arms to welcome the sober, elegant Swiss author, who so correctly

preserved a just balance between *romantisme* and idealism.

His finished, strong, and yet delicate talent bears an unmistakable likeness to Octave Feuillet's; he has even at times treated the same subjects and discussed similar problems, without, however, losing his special originality, which consists chiefly in the admixture of the somewhat grave wisdom of his Genevese temperament with the exaltation of an idealised and romantic passion. In many of his books the heroine is a young girl or woman, all the more attractive that she is enigmatic and mysterious; a hundred accidents, each intrinsically interesting, imperil her virtue, but it invariably triumphs, proving victoriously that there are no temptations that a strong, honest will cannot conquer. These heroines are at once effusive and reticent, mystical and bold, enveloped with a nebulous fascination, and growing more sympathetic with every danger they encounter; they move in scenes and landscapes described by the author with extreme

felicity, conveying a restful sense of serenity and pastoral beauty. Strongly penetrated with the grandeur and reality of spiritualistic doctrines, Cherbuliez has never written a coarse, low, or immoral page; however, while remaining absolutely inoffensive, his novels have a gay, often a humorous vein, and their combined qualities have thoroughly justified the honour awarded their author of ranking among the *Immortals*.

Le Comte Kostia was a dangerous book to write for a beginner, for it gave the public the right to be exacting with regard to those that followed, and laid the writer under the obligation of maintaining himself on the level he had so early reached. Mystery pervades the weird story in the dramatic action, in the scenery, in the actors, in the passions. All the characters disconcert our judgment, they startle us by surprising and successive revelations, and give abrupt and disquieting denials to our preconceived conjectures. Stephane appears as a feverish, violent, and perverse young man; but presently another

being shows through the first disguise ; a different nature is slowly developed. Under a rough, almost coarse exterior, Father Alexis has the soul of a Confessor and Martyr ; the lowly serf Ivan rises to real dignity. Comte Kostia, in the excess of his unbearable pain, conceives the insanely monstrous idea that he may, by inflicting torture on others, alleviate his own, and the progressive realisation of these hideous possibilities is treated with a grave majestic power and impassive fatalism that finds a grand mediæval frame in the frowning ramparts and crumbling castles of the old Rhine country.

Paule Merée was tragical also, but here the victim succumbs not under a supernatural and delirious vengeance, but under the equally deadly weapons of cant and calumny, mortally wounded by the hand of the man she loves, and unable to dispel the dread suspicion that maddens him. After these two powerful novels Cherbuliez seemed to achieve a transition between the first gloomy outcome of austere thought and sombre

ascetism and a more modern, moderate, and indulgent toleration. *Le Roman d'une Honnête Femme*, Parisian in form and sentiment, is still imbued with enough Genevese restraint to create at times a slight dissonance, but it was a step, nay a stride, towards the next, more perfect works. *Le Grand Œuvre*, in which the author, still young and fervent, passes in review, in a series of *Entretiens sous un Châtaignier*, all the solutions given of the end of human societies. The exponents are three men who might allegorically represent Prudence, Chance, and Necessity. They each plead their cause so forcibly, with such plausible arguments, that the reader remains puzzled, and it would even seem as if the author has been compelled from conscientious motives to withhold his own judgment and not throw his vote in the balance of conflicting doctrines.

Without lingering in detail over the excellent work done by Cherbuliez since 1887 to the present year, when he published *La Bête*, including *Olivier Maugant*, *La Ferme du Choquard*, *La*

Vocation du Comte Ghislain, and others of equal merit, I confess that *L'Aventure de Ladislas Bolski*, published in 1869, has always stood out in my eyes as the most distinctly original and interesting of all, in its strength and power, its delicate irony and pathetic intuition of the weakness, frivolity, exaltation, and disinterestedness of youth. It contains in a vivid form the eternally dramatic, eternally new element of the secret struggle between inclination and duty, principle and temptation, with a desperate appeal to the sophistry of passion.

Ladislas Bolski, son of a handsome, feather-brained father and a noble, earnest mother, is blindly attached to the former, in whom as a boy he sees the embodiment of all heroic virtues; when he dies, Ladislas is allowed to believe that it was in the service of oppressed Poland, and is determined to avenge his death and free his native land. Tronsko, the stern, devoted patriot, doubts the energy of one of his fickle race, and, yielding at last to his entreaties, only allows

him to join the cause after a time of probation, and when he has promised to renounce for ever a Russian woman whom he met accidentally and fell in love with in spite of her abhorred nationality. Ladislav is sent to Warsaw to join in a plot against the tyrants, is discovered, thrust into prison, and condemned to death. The Countess de Lievitz is passing through the city; she hears of the danger of her young adorer, and partly from caprice, partly from a tender admiration for his heroic endurance, resolves to save him. She seeks him in his cell with the information that the Governor has granted his pardon to her request, on the condition that the rebel signs his abjuration, and his promise of loyal service to the Czar. He indignantly refuses, but with an enigmatical smile she leaves the paper with him, saying that when he is free he can come to her abroad and claim the reward of his love. The unfortunate Ladislav struggles against the witchcraft of that hope, but love is the strongest: he yields, signs his dishonour and

his apostasy, and is free at once. He flies to the presence of the Countess, as anxious to forget his shame in her arms as to claim her promise. He finds an altered woman ; the transient passions awakened in her cold breast by the young man's sublime audacity have cooled before his weakness ; she repulses him, and cheats him with a monstrous stratagem. Fooled, betrayed, insulted by Tronsko, haunted by the memory of his mother, whom his cowardly action has killed ; learning that the father he idolised had perished not on a glorious battlefield, but in a drunken orgie, Ladislas, half insane already, has but one clear idea left—revenge ! He finds Madame de Lievitz on a terrace overhanging the Lake of Geneva, and in a transport of rage, passion, and madness, hurls himself into the water, locking her in his arms.

This rapid and bald analysis gives but a very imperfect idea of a plot which is admirably developed ; some of the delineations of character are of rare beauty. I shall be forgiven if I give

extracts in full. This is how Cherbuliez describes the proud, pale Countess Bolski, Ladislas' mother :

“Some one has said that nothing is more like Heaven than the glance of a Polish woman. He must have known my mother. She had in her eyes something that was not of this earth, and went beyond life. She had long ago lost all her illusions, and looked only at her duties. Yet, no—to the end she had retained the illusions of charity. To her, poverty was holy and washed out all stains. The guiltiest wretch, if he was miserable, seemed to her as white as snow. Her charity was a passion as much as a virtue ; she was not compassionate to the poor—she loved them. She never gave a piece of bread without giving with it a piece of her soul.

“All her sorrows had come from her lofty, unflinching patriotism. Once only she rebelled.

“‘Poland!’ she exclaimed, ‘I have loved her too well. I gave her all—my heart and my life.’ My mother was a true Polish woman ;

she suckled me with gall and blood; she rocked me with the songs that are a warning of evil, like the howls of a dog in the night. I stammered those deadly words at dawn with my prayers; and at night, when my dolls were laid to sleep, I sought my brothers, and cried to them: "Poland is dead, and you are here!" Ladislas, I saw you print a kiss on your father's portrait; you owe me ten times as many. If your father is dead, it was I who killed him, and his blood is on my head. He was the son of a man who had denied his country, and accepted office at the Russian Court; his name was pronounced with loathing by all good patriots. When he loved me, and asked me to be his wife, I refused him four times—yes, four times, I tell you; and I only consented to wed when he swore on the crucifix that he would renounce all the traditions of his family, and die some day for Poland. But—such things happen—a woman becomes a mother, and her heart grows faint. I hung over the cradle in

which you were sleeping your first sleep, and with bated breath I said to Poland: "Oh! do not take this one; what is *here* I shall keep; it is my share of this world's joys." Oh! trust me—Poland and I, we are quits. She took my father, Jean Solweski, who died insane in the Ural mountains; she took my mother, killed by despair; she took my brother Casimir, who strangled himself in his prison; she took my brother Ladislas, who left us one night, saying, "You will hear from me," and who never came back to tell us his secret. She took your father, Stanislas Bolski, who fell under Russian bullets. Ah, I have counted my dead; the reckoning is correct. Poland has devoured my heart; one fragment remained—I kept it. I do not curse her, but she must not interfere with me now. What was in the cradle I have kept—and *shall* keep.'"

And yet the mother lets him go, this son of many prayers—sends him to his duty with these words: "Remember, it is less difficult and less

meritorious in a Pole to be a hero than an honest man ; it is grand to be a hero, grander to be a conscience ;" and she died of his desertion to the cause, cursing him for his treachery. He had started with such brave, juvenile enthusiasm after reading the fiery pages of Mickiewicz ; his young blood was aflame ; he dwelt day and night on "a people of electors on horseback, awaiting the command of God, on the errors, the discords, the disorder of ideas, the wavering of will, followed by appalling vengeful disasters ; the birds of prey fastening on their victims, a mystery of terror and blood, massacres and tortures ; the madness of a heroism that promises impossible things, and does more ; passive resistance and bold deeds ; a dead, a buried nation incessantly lifting the stone of her tomb to show Europe her open wounds, her sweat of blood, and the desolate smile of an undying hope."

Tronsko, the uncompromising stern patriot, has nothing in common with the elegant, frivolous young Bolski, on whom he makes a pro-

found impression from the moment he saw him unexpectedly enter his mother's house.

“He was a middle-aged man, very tall, of strong muscular build. His forehead was broad and open, his chest square, his nostrils and hands hairy; he had the head of a lion, the neck of a bull, with heavy rolls of flesh. His deep sunken eyes, high cheekbones, and boldly accented nose gave his features an expression of powerful energy. His skin was furrowed with countless little lines that wrinkled it in every direction; his left cheek was barred in its entire length by a deep cut. When his face was in repose his eyes, buried under enormously bushy brows, were hardly visible, and his mouth was concealed in the shadow of his grey beard; but as soon as he became animated, the sunken orbits glowed like coals, and shot out fiery glances that struck straight like bullets, while a strange smile, mysterious as the Joconda's, glided from beneath the thickness of the iron moustache. He was not, strictly speaking,

handsome, but he had a fine, almost a historical, face; it told of events, adventures—a whole past. It said plainly: ‘I have lived; I have suffered; and yet I am here.’

“He seemed to realise the epigraph written by Mickiewicz at the beginning of his book. ‘The Pole calls himself a pilgrim because he has taken a vow to march to *his* Holy Land, the Fatherland, and sworn to walk onwards till he has found it.’”

When Tronsko finds that the lad he has trusted against his better judgment has failed in his high resolve, and sacrificed honour to an irresistible love, he upbraids him with mingled wrath, scorn, and irony:

“‘I tell you that the failing of a man’s will is irreparable; that the man who draws back to jump further will never jump at all, and that he who drops asleep on a cowardly action will find his cowardice under his pillow when he awakes in the morning.’ He moved to the hearth, picked up a piece of charred wood, and,

turning to the wall, straightened his tall bent figure and hastily traced on it five words: 'Slavus Saltans! the Polish mountebank!' '*Slavus Saltans!*' he continued, 'which means the son of the aristocrat who has made a god of his pleasure, and shouts in a falsetto voice: "*I am all rule, all law, all the universe!*" *Slavus Saltans!* useless among the useless, spendthrift of money and time, who does not remember to-day what he longed for yesterday, who runs breathlessly after his caprices that race faster before him! *Slavus Saltans!* Step into the booth, gentlemen, and see the king of clowns; he jumps for a duchess and for a courtesan, and while he jumps he breaks banks and bottles! *Slavus Saltans!* in other words, a Pole of the footlights, a Pole with plumed hat, spangles and draperies, a gesticulating and posturing histrion, enamoured of publicity and attitudes. Search him thoroughly; under the gold and tinsel you will find only a delusive and slippery soul that will glide away in your grasp; but

do not fear that his conscience will reproach him, it is miraculously absent. He has entered into a compact with that accommodating commodity; to-day he dishonours himself—to-morrow it will say: "I know nothing—I was not there." *Slavus Saltans!* He aspired to become a Kronaschi! he will never be aught than a hero of boudoirs and gambling hells. By the Lord, his end will be fine! he will gulp down his last infamy in a delicately chased golden goblet, and fall back felled by debauchery, with the proud smile of a paladin, draping himself in his ignominy.' "

Tronsko reveals the real story of the death of Ladislas' father, ending with these words: "He was a Bolski, and the Bolskis are only killed for a woman." But when the final apostasy of the young man is revealed to him by the traitor's own confession, Tronsko's horror is almost silent, but his anger even more crushing—he cuts off the hand with which he had on oath answered for Bolski's devotion to the

Polish cause, and dismisses him, saying, "Go and wash off my blood which has bespattered you;" and, showing the severed hand, "Take it as a present from me."

In striking contrast, but equally good of its kind, is the portrait of the Russian politician, without brains and without talent, lifted and maintained in a high official position by the cleverness and indomitable ambition of his wife.

"M. de Lievitz was one of those men who are always representing. He carried himself on every occasion with a measured gravity, a Germanic rigidity that stiffened his knees and elbows. He never relaxed the reserve of his attitude and the solemnity of his demeanour, even in moments of strong and real emotion, and certainly his sleep must have had the official character of a public duty. His smile, like his glance, was completely empty. It would have pleased him to have it believed that his eyes were mute from discipline, but

it was plain that they had nothing to say, and he deceived no one by his mysterious airs. One felt that he carried in his head some musty old, evaporated Ministerial secrets, dragged all over the world and known to all; that he obstinately mounted guard over these bursted balloons, and naïvely dreaded imaginary burglars. Possibly, at times he had the vague intuition, the latent consciousness of his nullity; his face betrayed the melancholy of a fool who has caught a glimpse of his true self."

"To speak our mother tongue is to have our Fatherland on our lips." This is only one of the thousand ideas Cherbuliez has dropped in the pages of the story, and the last I intend to quote; if I did not stop, I should glean on for ever in that prolific field.

Maquet, the great *collaborateur* of the elder Dumas, so lately dead, assisted the author in adapting the novel for the stage. By one of the inscrutable accidents that befall dramatic ventures, *Ladislav Bolski*, at the Vaudeville, was far from

being the success it should have been. Brunetière, the capable critic, praised the play; it was admirably acted by Madame Pasca and Pierre Berton, but it did not long remain on the bills, and was never revived. In the same year (1879) another of Cherbuliez' novels was arranged by M. Meilhac for the stage of the Odéon, and had a better fortune. The former was a drama, the second a comedy, with some dramatic situations, and had been composed with remarkable talent.

Samuel Brohl et Compagnie can be dismissed with a few lines as far as the story in itself is concerned; to be appreciated it must be read, and it is a pleasure which few readers will abstain from. The son of a Jewish tavern-keeper is carried off, or, more correctly, *bought*, by a Russian princess, who proposes to educate and refine him into a gentleman. An adventurer by instinct, Samuel travels abroad as soon as his education is concluded, and, served by chance, appropriates the name and papers of a Polish nobleman, Count Abel Laniski, and proceeds unblushingly and

successfully to personate him. At a Swiss hotel he meets the immensely rich daughter of a celebrated *savant*; conceives the idea of marrying the beautiful girl, artfully lays his plans, is beloved, and is on the eve of carrying off his prize, when the princess, his benefactress, effectually unmasks the false Laniski, and shows him in all his degradation and infamy to his future bride; rudely undeceived, her loves dies, and she sends him back to his low obscurity. Again the consummate knowledge Cherbuliez had acquired of the Russian character is noticeable in numerous traits and portraits of *Samuel Brohl et Compagnie*.

While it is undeniable that Octave Feuillet is a master of the school to which Victor Cherbuliez belongs, and a veteran in the illustrious army of literature, it yet almost seems as if the author of *Monsieur de Camors* had never been willingly awarded a legitimate position quite in accordance with his deserts. He fought his first battles

at a time when it was the fashion to revile *en masse* the writers of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*. "Abonné de la Revue" had been made a term of half-contemptuous ridicule; it was used in that sense when the brothers de Goncourt placed the expression in the mouth of one of the characters in *Henriette Maréchal*, and in the eyes of the young literary generation it was synonymous to old fogey. The excellence of M. de Buloz's magazine triumphed eventually over prejudice, but as Feuilleť's reputation had begun in the earlier days when the strife was still raging, a leaven of latent antagonism remained against the author, who was scornfully labelled as a "mundane writer," and supposed to be crushed by the censure. To be an *ecrivain mondain* implied in those days that the novelist's sole preoccupation was to curry favour with society, and therefore to fashion his talent according to worldly tastes. The appreciation was generally accepted, and it injured Feuilleť. By nature, disposition, and temperament, he was neither

inclined nor armed for violent controversial conflicts; the admirable analyst of the heart of women had himself something of the feminine sensitiveness that shrinks into itself when it is rudely handled.

Yet not even the bitterest detractors of his talent, those who smiled superciliously at all the charming, exquisitely delicate shorter stories he had already published—*La Petite Comtesse*, *La Crise*, *La Partie d'Echecs*, and the well-known *Proverbes*—could deny the merits or withhold their admiration when such masterly works as *Montjoie*, *Monsieur de Camors*, and *Julie de Trécœur* appeared; when some of the finest plays on the French stage were written, when Sarah Bernhardt acted *Dalila* at the Comédie Française before an enthusiastic audience, and when his splendid maturity heralded the hale and delightful vitality of his old age.

Another and wholly irrelevant reproach was directed against Feuillet, perpetuated by irreconcilable antagonists, and still occasionally revived.

He had been a favourite at the Court of Napoleon III.; the Empress professed the warmest friendship for him, and considered him as one of the pleasantest *habitués* of the Tuileries and Compiègne. And why should he not have accepted the flattering demonstrations showered on the man and the author? Was it an unpardonable offence that he scattered a little of his great wealth of talent on the little plays and charades he wrote so deftly for the Imperial gatherings? Was it a heinous misdemeanour to acknowledge in that graceful fashion the gracious welcome he received? Is it a crime that he remained faithful in his homage to the bereaved and exiled woman who alone survives of a reign of eighteen years, which, after all, had some moments of grandeur? The Empress has never forgotten the author of *Monsieur de Camors*, the pleasant companion of happier days, and when not long ago a severe affliction befell him, the first telegram he received was signed "Eugénie," and came from a mother who had known the same

sorrow. The silent and respectful fidelity of Octave Feuillet to a great misfortune, is not the least praiseworthy trait in a man who is essentially gentle, loyal, and possessed of all the distinctive qualities of a refined, educated man of the world and of a courteous and sympathetic gentleman.

In *Monsieur de Camors*, Feuillet grappled for the third time with the lions and tigers lurking in a human soul, and he has done so without contortions, straining of the muscles, attitudes, or apparent effort. He has husbanded his strength with even more reserve than in *Montjoie*, and has never assumed the pose of an athlete. His force and energy are purely moral, his voice is a purely human voice, trained to say the most difficult things with calm intrepidity; no interjections, shouts or screams, no availing himself of a sensational situation for ranting declamation; on the contrary, whenever a perilous passage occurs he lowers his already subdued tones and hurries on swiftly till he once more treads on safer ground.

Monsieur de Camors has been called an immoral book by those who, starting from erroneous and superficial premises, have understood neither the subject nor the author. It may not be—few novels dealing with passion are—a book to place unreservedly in the hands of a very young and very ignorant girl, but it is the same grand lesson taught by the tragedies of old, where a man born for the highest fortune is fatally debased by a vice of nature, imprudently fostered, or by an excessive disproportion between the lofty conceptions of his mind and his physical disabilities to realise them. M. de Camors was not born perverse, but noble and good ; only a parasite germ had been dropped in his soul ; it would have been in his power to eradicate it ; he did not do so ; he let it grow and develop till it killed all that was great and wholesome in his nature. His whole life was poisoned by an error of education, by the weak and careless adoption of a false principle ; his conscience, whose rebellions had been stifled, died within him, and

step by step the false props on which he rested failing him, he fell into the very errors which his manhood most loathed. Feuillet proves triumphantly that no human being, however well gifted, can affranchise himself from the higher laws that govern the inner self; that it is not indifferent what principles we follow; that honour as it is understood in the world is not an all-sufficient armour, and that a doubtful code is less a safeguard than a peril and a temptation.

Camors' native nobility and truth had been sapped by the detestable will of his father; his proud confidence in his own unstained dignity which he still believed could stand in lieu of virtue, faith, devotion and abnegation, blinds him to the downward course he is taking, and he sinks deeper and deeper into dishonour. The lower he falls, the more an avenging sense of his degradation dawns on his senses, and at last, when having removed all obstacles, reached the goal of his ambition, his hopes and his satisfied passion, he

realises the full extent of his infamy, his brilliant intellect becomes clouded, the admirable faculties that have made him great among men perish in abject remorse; the unreal fabric crumbles to pieces, and he lives on in hopeless, dependent idiocy, an object of pity and repulsion to the partner of his guilt.

The will of the elder Camors, a bold and perhaps unique page in the annals of fiction, deserves on that ground alone to be reproduced in its entirety. Placed at the beginning of the novel, and apparently irrelevant to the action, it is at once its keystone and its pivot; none but a great architect could so surely have laid the foundation on which the edifice rests. Written in 1867, through this monstrous document runs prophetically the egotistical pessimism of the present *fin de siècle*, while at the same time it seems inspired by the contemptuous cynicism of Pagan philosophers. Desperate unbelief and obstinate denegation are the embodiment of the suicide himself.

"TO MY SON.

"My son, life bores me—I leave it. The real superiority of man over the inert and passive beings that surround him is that he can throw off at will the fatal shackles, commonly called the laws of Nature. Man may, if he so wills it, refuse to grow old. Meditate on this axiom — it contains the whole of human strength.

"Science says so, and has proved it. The free and intelligent man is an exceptional animal on our planet ; the product of a series of unexpected combinations and transformations. He bursts upon the submissiveness of things like a discord and an insurrection. Nature created, but did not conceive him ; she is the goose, having unconsciously hatched an eagle's egg ; alarmed by the new-born monster, she endeavours to enslave him ; she overloads him with instincts which she erects into duties, and with police regulations which she calls religion. Every one of these chains riven, every one of these trammels cast

aside, is a step taken towards the virile emancipation of humanity.

“In saying this, I confess that I die in the faith of my epoch. I believe in Matter, uncreated, fertile, all-powerful, and eternal. It is the Nature of antiquity ; ripe to-day, it falls within the grasp of all ; it belongs to all who have reached enough maturity to bear its weight ; the ultimate religion of humanity is the bread of the strong. It has its sadness, for it isolates man ; but it has its grandeur, for it makes him free and godlike. It ordains no duties save those to himself ; it opens a splendid field to the clever and the fearless.

“The common herd remains, and will ever remain, more or less bowed under the yoke of their dead religions, under the tyranny of their instincts. What you see to-day in Paris, you will see always more or less : a society whose mind is atheistic, whose heart is devout. It believes in reality neither in Christ nor in Jupiter, but it goes on mechanically building

churches ; it is no longer even *Deist*; in its innermost thoughts it radically suppresses the old delusion of a personal and moral God, the Witness, the Sanction, the Judge, but it does not publicly or privately utter a word, write a line, or make a gesture which is not the corroboration of the delusion. This may be practical, but it is contemptible. Quit the herd, my son ; meditate and write your own catechism on a fresh white page.

“ As for myself, I lost my opportunity, for I was born a few years too soon. Heaven and earth were heaped with ruins, men were blind, science was relatively in its infancy. Moreover, the prejudices and antagonisms inherent to my name were all against the doctrines of the new world. I did not understand that, instead of sulking feebly before the victor, it was better to acknowledge the superiority of his weapons, wrench them from him, and crush him with them. In short, for want of a principle of action, I drifted vaguely ; my life had no definite plan. I have been merely a man of

pleasure; this is not enough. If you listen to me you will be more than that.

“What can a man be who has the common sense and energy of shaping his life according to his faith? I ask the question—you must answer it. I can only hurriedly give you some ideas which I believe to be true, and which you can digest at leisure. Materialism is a brutalising doctrine only for fools and weaklings. I do not, I admit, find in its code any of the teachings of commonplace morality, of what our fathers called virtues, but I read there a grand word which can take the place of many others—honour—and honour is self-esteem. Certainly a materialist cannot be a saint, but he can be a *gentilhomme*, and that is something. You are happily gifted, my son; I hold that you have only one duty in this world—to develop your gifts to their full extent, and to enjoy them in all their plenitude. Make use of women without scruple for pleasure, and of men for power, but do nothing mean.

“To guard against *ennui* driving you prematurely out of the world—as it does me—the moment the season of pleasure is ended, prepare for your middle age the emotions of ambition and public life. Do not bind yourself to the existing Government, you will have the opportunity of hearing it exalted by those who shall have overthrown it; it is a French fashion. Every generation claims its prey. You will ere long feel the onset of the coming one; hold yourself in readiness to stand at its head.

“You do not ignore, my son, that in politics every one has the principles of his temperament. The bilious are demagogues, the full-blooded are democrats, the nervous are aristocrats. You are both full-blooded and nervous; you have a fine constitution; this will enable you to make a choice. You can, for instance, be aristocratic as concerns yourself, and democratic as regards others. You will not be the only one.

“Master all the questions liable to excite the passions of your contemporaries, but never let

anything excite you. As a matter of fact, all principles are equally indifferent ; they are true or false according to the hour. Opinions are instruments which you must learn to play upon, so as to be a leader of men. In this also you will find companions.

“Remember, my son, that when you reach my age and become weary of all things, you will still crave for powerful sensations. The sanguinary game of revolutions will then be to you what your love affairs were at twenty.

“I am growing tired. Let me sum up. To be loved by women and feared by men ; to be impassible as a god before the tears of the former and the blood of the latter, to disappear in a whirlwind, is the destiny I missed, and which I bequeath to you. You are fitted by great faculties to carry it out in its integrity, provided you discard the vague weakness of heart which I have noticed in you, and which probably you got with your mother’s milk. As long as

man is born of woman, there will ever be something faulty in him.

“I say it again—endeavour to shake off all natural servitudes, instincts, affections, sympathies, which are as many obstacles to your liberty and your strength.

“Do not marry unless a dominant interest impels you to do so.

“If you marry, have no children.

“Have no friends. When Cæsar grew old he had one friend, who was Brutus.

“The scorn of mankind is the beginning of wisdom.

“Improve your fencing—your thrusts are too broad.

“Do not get angry; laugh little; never shed tears. Farewell!

“CAMORS.”

The father ignored, and the son discovered to his undoing that honour is not honesty.

If *Monsieur de Camors* is deemed by some too grim and painful a story, Octave Feuillet has



THE
BOSTON-LIBRARY
SOCIETY

OCTAVE FEUILLET.

THE
VARIABLE-LENGTH
VECTOR

written many which are free from any such reproach. Worldly, elegant, I might almost say fashionable, they are pretty pictures of a hyper-refined society; they move gracefully in polished, aristocratic circles, and have a perfume of *bonne société* that is very delightful. Among the least known out of France is *Un Mariage dans le Monde*, dating from 1875, and extremely characteristic of the lighter methods of the author. In it a charming Parisian woman, as witty as she is virtuous, lectures a young husband and gives him sound advice on the best means of ensuring his conjugal happiness; she warns him against seeking impossible virtues in his bride, and shows him where he, in turn, falls short of the standard he advocates.

"You seek, and have not found," she writes, "for no one will, that *rara avis*, a *femme d'intérieur*, because it implies a bird, rarer still—*l'homme d'intérieur*."

"And pray, dear sir, who is the 'home husband' ? It is not a man who dallies at his wife's

feet, who looks over the *menus*, who writes invitations, who lowers the lamps and regulates the clocks. We call an *homme d'intérieur* the man with whom we read the same book ; with whom we see the same play ; with whom we admire the same picture or the same landscape ; the man who creates around us an intellectual life close to his own, or rather inside it ; who associates us, if not to all his occupations, at least to all his leisure ; who has no tastes nor pleasures, no interests of heart and mind in which he does not give us our share ; the man who, when he marries, frankly sinks everything he possesses into the community without any selfish reserves. Be that man, and you will attach your wife to your home, because you have bound yourself to it first ; your hearthstone will not be only in your house, you will carry it with you wherever you go, like a domestic altar. Wherever she is with you, there it will be likewise ; in her heart and in yours, provided you mingle in loving intimacy your impressions, enthusiasms, beliefs and charities."

This gentle advice is very different from the cruel precepts of the suicide's will, and a woman's tender philosophy has the beneficial influence of reconciling a married couple fast drifting asunder.

To the same category of stories belong *l'Histoire d'une Parisienne*, *Les Portraits de la Marquise*, and, with a more dramatic situation, *Julia de Trécœur*. Indeed, the latter has been by some critics considered worthy of being placed on the same literary level as *Monsieur de Camors*.

Since the day the latter book appeared (1868) Octave Feuillet has been called the author of *Monsieur de Camors*, a consecration of its merits more eloquent than any praise.

When, two years ago, he lost his son, his beloved and inseparable companion, the prostration of the shock was so great that he declared his intention of renouncing for ever all literary work, and informed the manager of the Gymnase that he would not finish a play he was then writing for that theatre. However, as the months passed, although they did not lessen his grief,

they taught him that the only alleviation he could find to his crushing pain would never come to him in solitude or travel, in idleness or the consolations of his friends, but in the resumption of the labours that had charmed and filled his lifetime. Once more the old man bent over his desk, once more he allowed the visions of his fancy to visit his lonely study, and if a tear would drop on his withered cheek as he remembered that the son with whom he exchanged such long confidences was no longer at his side, yet the pen travelled on, and *Honneur d'Artiste* saw the day. It has the grace of language, the impeccable structure, the exquisitely pathetic episodes, and the sustained interest of his best stories, with the *morbidezza* of a talent that has nothing more to learn from experience and practice. The first part contains scenes of pure comedy touched with a feathery lightness of hand; the latter pages are of strong dramatic power. It is treated with enough realism to be sincere, but without the exaggerations that too

often render truth grotesque ; and, written in the declining years of Octave Feuillet's old age, it has more freshness and juvenility than the work of many young modern authors, which is but the stale and oft-repeated copy of merely sensuous and often coarse pictures.

Feuillet, like all real artists, dreads death far less than the hour when his intellectual strength will forsake him. He has lived with his inspiration so long, his magic wand has evoked so many smiling or mournful figures, his fingers have played so lovingly on all the chords of the human soul ; he has suffered, hoped, and wept with so many beautiful, heroic, or passionate women, that should they no longer people his solitude at his bidding, the void would be so cruel and irreparable that neither fortune nor fame could bring him solace. His numerous admirers can only hope that *Honneur d'Artiste* is a guerdon of undiminished vigour and of other works to come equally worthy of their predecessors.

He was born in 1812 at St. Lo, in Brittany, commencing his literary career very modestly under the name of Desiré Hazard (a pseudonym he soon abandoned), and entered the Academy in 1862, at the death of Scribe. He remained faithful to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, giving that publication the *primeur* of his best stories. At the fall of the Empire he relinquished the post that had been given him by Napoleon III., of Librarian to the Imperial residences.

* * * * *

Les Morts vont vite, says the ballad, and as the book went to press, I have had to turn back to this chapter and add to it that Octave Feuillet is, alas! no longer a contemporary. The perfect gentleman, the charming *raconteur*, the gifted author of *Monsieur de Camors*, the faithful friend of misfortune, died at the latter end of December, calmly, gently, almost happily, surrounded by those he loved, and deeply mourned. He was laid in his last resting-place with all honours and deep regrets. His colleagues of the

Academy rendered full justice to their departed member; and those nearer and dearer to him can never fill the blank that his absence leaves. Few men of seventy-eight have retained to the last so gracious a manner and such suave courtesy. In the obituary of the century, his name will hold a glorious place.

VII.

Alphonse Daudet—His abodes—*l'Immortel*—The French Academy—His high position in literature—Parallel between Sidonie Chèbe and Madame Bovary—*Jack*—*Le Nabab*—*Les Rois en Exil*.

BEFORE taking up his residence in his lordly hotel of the Rue Bellechasse, M. Alphonse Daudet occupied Avenue de l'Observatoire, No. 3, a sunny cheerful apartment looking over the Luxembourg Gardens, a dreamy part of the older Paris, with little traffic, white gravelled paths, dear to the dreamer, the student, the poet, and to young mothers who, seated on the rustic chairs, their needlework in their busy fingers, watch the play of their little ones during the long summer afternoon. Daudet soon felt the happier influence of this new domain, for which he had forsaken the gloomy house of the Place Royale, in which

Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné was written. It was a tall ancient building of red brick with lofty ceilings, monumental staircases, and rooms so large and sombre that the Southern singing bird, the Provençal minstrel, shivered with cold in the chill duskiness of the vast dreary expanse. Fortunately for himself, he was already then the owner of the pretty cottage of Champrosay—which he has described as being situated “thirty miles from Paris, at a lovely bend of the Seine, a provincial Seine, rural and new, invaded by bulrushes, irises, and water-lilies, bearing on its bosom bunches of grasses and clumps of tangled roots on which the tired dragon-flies alight and allow themselves to be lazily floated down stream. On either sloping bank wheat-fields and vineyards; here and there a dotted green island, l’Ile des Paveurs, l’Ile des Moineaux, and another yet, quite small and nameless, a bouquet of briars and tossing branches, my favourite halting-place. I used to let my canoe drift among the reeds,

and when the silken rustle of the long stems were hushed, shut up within my green walls, a tiny harbour of transparent water rounded in the shadow of an old willow-tree became my study, and my two oars crossed were my desk."

It was at Champrosay, in Delacroix's old studio, however, not in the fluvial oasis that had become too damp for his impaired health, that Daudet wrote *l'Immortel*, his audacious challenge to the French Academy. Was it a novel, a pamphlet, a revenge, or an act of justice? Opinions differed according to the greater or lesser degree in which susceptibilities were wounded, but very few cordially approved Daudet in this experiment.

The dominant idea of *l'Immortel* is a revolt against every kind of hypocrisy in the different circles in which the action moves, and not solely, if chiefly, a satire aimed at the time-honoured institution here held up to ridicule, and even condemnation. A great number of the illustrious "Forty" were mercilessly gibbeted under their

borrowed names. Whether Daudet intended it or not, Paris did not hesitate to proclaim the identity of the characters it recognised; *Rehu*, said the world, was the centenary Chevreuil; *Danjou* was Pailleron, the witty writer of so many sparkling plays; *le Comte de Bretigny* is the Duc de Broglie, the Legitimist leader; *Lamboise*, Maxime du Camp, the man who has best written of Paris, its institutions, administration, markets, thieves, paupers, and hospitals; *Herscher*, the great Zola himself, who at the time the novel appeared had not rescinded his opinions, written *Le Rène*, dissolved his moral partnership with Daudet and the Brothers de Goncourt, and whom none expected ever to see a postulant for a *fauteuil*. *Gazan* is Ernest Renan, the stout, placid, benevolent author of the *Vie de Jesus*; *Loisillon*, Camille Doucet, the perpetual secretary of the Institute, and everybody declared they recognised Daudet in *Vedrine*. In spite of some remarkable writing, and a grand, simple perfection of style and description, the book owed

its remarkable popularity to this secondary cause, and it cannot be denied that the plot is thin to tenuity, and that to the uninitiated the story must appear long, and even at times dull.

Daudet excels, and this is a distinctive feature of his rare talent, in the dramas that result from the play of character, and the shock of contradictory passions in the thousand details patiently seen and observed; in the photographing of certain Parisian customs and scenes which explain, justify, and corroborate the action. In order to bring this faculty more palpably under the reader's notice, I shall take at random from *l'Immortel* the scene of the funeral of Loisillon, the secretary of the Academy, and give it almost complete.

"It was written that this man was to be always lucky, even that he would die opportunely. A week later, the season over, Paris out of town, the House and the Institute taking their long vacation, a few delegates of the Societies

of which Loisillon had been secretary or president, would have followed the hearse behind the employés of the 'Bureau,' and—no one else. But, judicious even beyond the tomb, he went away precisely at the right moment, on the eve of the Grand Prix, selecting a perfectly blank week, without a crime, a duel, a sensational case or political incident, one of which the funeral of the perpetual secretary would be the sole amusement of Paris.

"The black Mass was to be said at noon, but long before that hour an immense crowd had gathered before St. Germain des Près; the traffic was stopped, only the carriages bringing the guests were allowed the privilege of reaching the square widened by a severe cordon of policemen spaced like sharpshooters. Who Loisillon was, what he had done during his stay of seventy years among men, what the tall silver capital letter embroidered on the sombre draperies meant, was known to very few in the vast concourse of people impressed by the display of

the force, and the large room made for the deceased. Breadth, distance, and emptiness always express respect and grandeur. As it had been rumoured that actresses and celebrities would be present, the Parisian *badauds* labelled each familiar face with a name as they stood about and chatted airily before the church.

“It was there under that black draped porch that the funeral oration of Loisillon was pronounced—the real oration, not the formal speech delivered a little later in the cemetery—the true opinion on the man and his work, vastly different from the notices prepared for the morrow’s papers. His work! *A Journey to the Val d’Andorre*, published when Loisillon was Superintendent of the Beaux Arts: ‘The man! a type of the sly *avoué*, pitiable and obsequious, always bending a courtier’s spine in a constantly apologetic attitude; for ever craving pardon for his orders, for the broided palms on his coat, for his rank in that Academy where his artistic business faculties operated a fusion

between all the conflicting elements with none of which he assimilated ; pardon for his extraordinary luck ; pardon for the success of so much nullity and fidgety meanness.' They quoted his words when at a Board dinner he bustled round the table, a napkin under his arm, and exclaimed proudly : ' What a good flunky I might have been ! ' Appropriate epitaph for his tomb.

" And while they philosophically discussed the nonentity of his life, that nonentity triumphed even in death. The carriages followed each other before the church in a serried file, the long liveried coats of footmen darted, fluttered, and bowed to the pavement, with the accompaniment of slamming doors and lowered steps ; groups of journalists made way for the Duchess Padovani, passing haughty and imperious in her mourning robes ; Madame Ancelin, rosy in her black crêpe ; Madame Eriza, whose red eyes sparkling under her veil attracted a detective's notice ; the whole congregation of the ladies of the Academy,

the fervent and bigoted admirers who came less to honour the memory of the late Loisillon than to contemplate their living idols, the immortals fabricated and kneaded by their clever little hands, true creations of women into which they had moulded their unemployed forces of vanity, ambition, artfulness, and will.

“Actresses were there under the pretence of some dramatic orphanage presided over by the deceased, testifying by their presence to the prodigious longing that possesses them all of playing a part in whatever occurs; deluged in tears and tragical, they might be taken for near relatives. Suddenly a carriage stops, a vision of agitated and forlorn black draperies alights; the anguish of grief is harrowing to witness! Surely the wife this time! No, Marguerite Oger, the fair-haired actress; her recognition provokes a long murmur in the four corners of the square and a quick jostling of curiosity. A journalist rushes from the porch to meet her, grasps her hands, comforts, and supports her.

“ ‘ Yes, you are right, I must be firm ! ’

“ Brushing away her tears with a lace handkerchief, swallowing her sobs, she enters, or rather makes her entry into the vast sombre aisle, starred at its further end by the countless tall glimmering candles, falls on her knees on a *prie-dieu* on the ladies’ side, and sinks forwards, prostrate ; then lifting her mournful desolate head, she asks a friend near, ‘ What did they take at the Vaudeville last evening ? ’

“ ‘ Four thousand,’ answered the friend, in the same tone of catastrophe.

“ Under the sunlight, in the broad reserved space, the general effect was startling and hideous. Behind the hearse, the members of the *Bureau*, who seemed by some ferocious wager to have been selected from the most grotesque old men of the Institute, were made uglier still by the costume designed by David, the embroidered coat, the plumed hat, the gala sword beating against misshapen legs—the latter certainly not contemplated by David. Gazan came first, his hat

awry on his lumpy cranium, the vegetable green of his coat accenting the earthy squamous obesity of his proboscidian face. Next to him, the long, gaunt, and sinister Laniboire, with the purple blotches and contorted mouth of a hemiplegic clown, hid his palms under an overcoat so short that it exposed the tails of his coat and the point of his sword, giving him the appearance of an undertaker, but a far less imposing one than the majestic official heading the group with his ebony wand. Others followed; awkward, shamefaced, conscious of, and apologising by their deprecatory attitude, for the ridiculousness of their costume acceptable perhaps under the cold, lofty, and almost historical light of their own dome, but in the full vitality and activity of the street, in the clear sunshine, turning them into a procession of dressed apes. In truth, it would be fun to throw in their midst a handful of nuts, if only to see them catch them on all-fours. . . . Beyond, along the course cleared for the

whole length of the *cortège*, the muffled roll of drums alternated with bugle calls, bringing crowds of spectators on the side-walks and to the windows, till the full band again burst forth with a crash into the March for a Hero's Death. Before these majestic honours, this national funeral, this proud rebellion of a man humbled and conquered by Death, it was difficult to realise that it was all done for Loisillon, the perpetual secretary of the French Academy—for a nobody—for less than nothing."

The *dénouement* of *l'Immortel* is tragical, and so far realistic that in 1829 a perpetual secretary did actually commit suicide by throwing himself into the Seine. Daudet shows us the poor Immortal, ridiculous to his colleagues, misunderstood, insulted by his wife, dishonoured by his son, discovering at last that the cupola of the Institute is not the safe haven against the miseries of life he had trustingly believed it to be, and that the strenuous efforts made to secure a seat under its roof might, otherwise applied,

have brought him the happiness he has missed. Irretrievably discouraged, he flies, deserting the sacred building in quest of the profound rest death alone can give.

“Where does he go?

“Straight in front of him, as in a dream; he crosses the square and half the bridge; the fresher air somewhat revives him. He sits down on a bench, raises his hat, and turns back his cuffs to cool his throbbing arteries. Gradually the low regular lapping of the water soothes him, but he recovers only enough to remember and suffer. What a woman! What a monster! And he had lived at her side for thirty-five years without knowing her! A shuddering horror convulsed his frame as he recalled the abominable words he had just heard. She had spared him nothing; left nothing alive in his breast, not even his sole remaining pride, his faith in his work, his belief in the Academy. And as he thought of the Academy he turned mechanically towards it. Beyond the deserted

bridge broadening like an immense avenue to its steps, rose the Palais Mazarin. Oh! that dome, those stones, delusive cause of his misfortunes! It was there that he came to seek his wife, without love, without joy, for the promise of belonging to the Institute! He had obtained the coveted position, but how? He knows it now, and the shame of it. . . . He was talking aloud; his forehead was bare; he grasped the stone railings of the bridge with both hands, as he was wont formerly to grasp the edge of the professor's rostrum. Beneath him the river flowed, darkened with shadows, between the straight lines of the gas-lamps twinkling with the silent life of light, creating a vague uneasiness, like all that moves, sees, and does not express itself. . . . Feeling himself alone, without a shoulder on which to rest and weep, he understood at last that the infamous creature was right, and that he must once for all and for good pack his trunk!"

Prejudice and personal feeling have made

M. Daudet a trifle unjust against the Academy of France. This institution has, no doubt, its defects, its errors, and its weak points; but they are not more glaring or fatal than those inherent to every public body, and it cannot be denied that since it was created up to the present time it has rendered good and lasting service to literature and science, service which it ill behoves literary men to ridicule or forget. When Cardinal de Richelieu became ambitious of playing the part of Mæcenæ as well as of statesman, he added to his political fame the glory of appreciating the excellence and superiority of such men as Corneille, Rotrou, Boisrobert, and Baro, and of benefiting them in a novel and practical way. The first years of the reign of Louis XIII. inaugurated a new status for men of letters, and raised it to a regular profession; till then, writers, and indeed men of science and artists, had been virtually out of the recognised pale of society, and their only acknowledged claims were the qualifications they possessed independently of

their condition as such. They owed it to the patronage of the Cardinal that their position became socially recognised. When in January 1635 Richelieu obtained the signature of Louis XIII. to the Letters Patent decreeing the foundation of the French Academy, and erected it into a monarchical institution, writers and authors were *de facto* endowed with an assured and respectable rank ; it may almost be said that henceforth there was in the State a Bench of Men of Letters as there was a Bench of Peers in the Parliament. The names of the original forty members are probably almost forgotten, and their works absolutely so ; but since 1635 every man of talent, intellect, and superiority in art or science, has sooner or later occupied a *fauteuil* and been elected to it by the suffrage of a gifted and competent majority. Equally since the first part of the seventeenth century, not only were the forty Academicians, according to the tenure of the Letters Patent, " the equals of the officers of the Crown, of the *Ducs et Pairs* and the Princes

of the Blood," but provision was made to relieve, assist, and preserve from want the growing community of literary men; the number of those who have been practically benefited at the hands of the Academy is incalculable. Donations, legacies, accumulated capital and Government grants enable the "Immortals" to be generous and liberal in the distribution of the funds set apart for prizes. Besides those for deeds of valour and charity, and for virtue, the Academy gave in 1888 fifty-two thousand francs in awards for the works judged worthy of the reward. Gold medals and medals of honour are presented in special cases. The Queen of Roumania, in that same year, received one of the former for her book, *Les Pensées d'une Reine*, and M. Camille Doucet, in awarding it, paid a graceful and flattering homage to the talent of "Carmen Sylva."

After this digression, suggested by *l'Immortel*, I hasten to return to Alphonse Daudet, and having commenced with extracts from one of



THE
BOSTON-LIBRARY
SOCIETY

ALPHONSE DAUDET.

397
VARELLA, ROBERT
VARELLA

his latest books, we are compelled to retrace our steps and return to the time when the most charming and original of French novelists began his literary career. I do not believe that these adjectives applied to him are exaggerated, although it might seem presumptuous to hazard a purely personal opinion, however sincere; but in a competition of excellence I do not hesitate to say that if the prize were not unanimously awarded to the author of *Jack*, yet he would receive a large majority of votes. It has been said that France is virtually proved to be the foremost country in the world, because when every nation has proclaimed its own superiority, each gives the second place to France. In the same way, if some dissentient voices refuse the palm of absolute completeness to Daudet's talent, yet even they do not deny his claim to the second place.

Some fifteen years ago he wrote *Le Petit Chose*, the simple autobiography of a poor, fragile, sensitive, suffering boy, a little too long-drawn-

out for the subject perhaps, but breathing sincere emotion, and the remarkable comprehension of childhood which seems an intuition with some authors, such as Dickens, Bret Harte, Victor Hugo, whose unconscious pathos has so often moistened our eyes. The book was a success, all the more remarkable that Daudet had not found his true vocation in his *débuts*; he had wavered, hesitated, turned back, moved in a circle, wasted himself on short tales, sketches, miniature portraits, pretty fancies, and graceful descriptions, as in *Clairette*, *Le Rouge Gorge*, *Aventures d'un Papillon*, and other trifles, charming no doubt, but not serious enough to consolidate his reputation. He was already suspected of not having the stamina, energy, patience, and strength that could create larger and more distinctive works, and this appreciation was reluctantly accepted by the critics, for very few contemporaries have excited so powerful an interest and raised such buoyant hopes. *Le Petit Chose* came as a sur-

prise, *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné* as a revelation.

Screened and protected from indiscretion by his seeming indolence, the young man had slowly and perseveringly developed his talent, and by steady and constant labour brought it to a fruitful maturity. Yet, however finished and polished, his work never leaves the impression of effort or application. The reader is carried along by the magnetism of spontaneous inspiration ; he is surrounded by the subtle and vivifying atmosphere emanating from the glowing pages, where sentiment, imagination, observation, and word-painting rapidly follow each other with the prodigality of inexhaustible wealth, and the gentle, penetrating recurrence of the "*note émue*."

Madame Sidonie Risler, *née* Chèbe, has not without reason been compared to Madame Bovary ; it does not, however, result from this vague relationship that if Gustave Flaubert had not created his immortal heroine, Daudet would not have conceived his more modern one. In-

evitable similitudes must occur, when two minds of genius explore the same moral spheres ; humanity, which they study with equal fidelity, has more than one point of contact ; but no accusation of imitation can be addressed to the younger author. *Madame Bovary* was intended not only as the satire of a false ideal, but as a picture of provincial life ; it was painted by a pessimist it is true, but, such as it is, it has remained for over thirty years, a characteristic and unique book that effected for the dangerous sentimentality of the romantic school what *Don Quixote* did for the prolonged mania of chivalry in Spain, and Molière for the pedantry of the Hôtel Rambouillet in his *Précieuses Ridicules*. *Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné* is a mere Parisian adventure. The novel belongs entirely to the new form of fiction, now so completely naturalised, which is episodic and anecdotic, deriving from a faithful and intelligent observation of externals, the active principles of thought and imagination which formerly were considered the principal

motors of action. Sidonie Chèbe is not so much vicious as devoid of all moral sense ; the result is the same. In her insatiate appetite for the advantages of wealth she crushes in her cold, lithe, serpent-like fingers the honour of two men whom she ruthlessly sacrifices to her spurious ambitions. Ruin and death follow in her wake ; her fathomless egotism ignores pity or remorse ; she is the noxious, poisonous, but brilliant flower that flourishes on the dregs of civilisation in large cities ; woe to those who cull it, or even breathe its deleterious perfume !

Rarely has the action of a novel been carried onwards with such security and mastery ; there is neither break nor flaw in the sustained interest, in the implacable deduction of events ; the *crescendo* of emotion rises steadily in dramatic force, from the marriage of Risler to the treachery of his partner, from the revelation of the wife's guilt to the husband's death—the tragic climax. There is one extraneous element in the book, and it is perhaps the best ; the Delobelle family.

Mother, daughter and the old, conceited, selfish, idle actor, in whom the two women see a genius and a great man, are never-to-be-forgotten types. The comedian, always painted and posturing, "who has not the right to renounce his art," haunts all the cafés of the Boulevards in quest of an engagement that never comes ; when the humble, loving Desirée Delobelle dies of her timid, unrequited love, the whole empty vanity of the father is revealed in one telling trait. He follows the funeral arrayed in his best. "At last Delobelle, unable to contain himself any longer, leaned over towards Robricart, walking at his side. 'Did you see?' 'What?' And the unhappy father, wiping his eyes, murmured, not without some of his old fire, 'There are two private carriages!'" The poor girl's attempted suicide and death are among the most honestly pathetic scenes in modern fiction.

Jack is the biography of a boy born with the shrinking tenderness and acute sensitiveness which is the charm and bane of certain natures ;

the charm, because they compel love—the bane, because they are not equipped to face a harsh world. Jack, ignorant of his father's name, has centred all his filial affection on the only parent he knows. The mother, on whom the responsibility rests of atoning for the wrong she inflicted on her son before he was born, is a butterfly creature, whose wings were early singed in the irregular flames of trivial intrigues, and she is constitutionally incapable of standing alone. Jack is her toy, the recipient of her volatile joys and April sorrows, her petted companion for a few short years. He adores her ; then she fixes her unstable affections on the least worthy object she could select, and when inconstancy would have been excusable, she develops an obstinate fidelity for the lazy, discontented Bohemian whom she has married. D'Argenton is the admirably conceived type of the *ratés*, as Daudet happily calls them, who out of the bitterness of their failures, the secret consciousness of their nullity, rail at all that is great, scoff at all that is good, revile

the success of others, sponge on the society they affect to despise, cringe for position, and especially for applause, and wreck in their moral ruin and degradation all who are blind enough to believe in their self-assertions. D'Argenton is faithfully drawn; his vanity gilds his unsuccess, it feeds with tyrannical craving on the abject adoration of the weak, ignorant woman who for abject servitude to him has given up her fluttering, joyous existence; he exacts from her the sacrifice of her son, whose presence irritates his selfishness. The pampered boy is sent to fight his battle with life. An inexorable destiny pursues him from his illegitimate cradle to his hospital death-bed; his few rare joys only deepen the encompassing gloom; he lives uncared for, child, youth, and man; his treasures of tenderness and trust are crushed out of him; he passes from the dismal school-days to the laborious hours of manual labour; he endures the tortures of the *chambre de chauffe* as stoker on a Transatlantic steamer; his instincts are

brutalised, his heart is benumbed, his hopes are dead. In the hidden recesses of his soul, Jack has kept one faith, vague and dim but still alive, to which he clings like the amulet clasped by a drowning man—his old love for the mother who was his ideal of perfect womanhood, and who abandoned him. But even that touching faith, that obstinate trust, is shattered at last; the cup of sorrow must be drained to the dregs, and as if happiness was but a thing to be dreamt of, guessed at, but never tasted, he dies just as a pure girl's love might have healed his wounds and solaced his remaining days. "Set free!" exclaims the kind old doctor, the only watcher of his death agony. He was right: for such a martyr, Death is the supreme deliverance.

Jack is a mournful story; it leaves the reader with the impression of a desolation so profound that it becomes cruel and seems almost unnecessary; the public in a measure rebelled against the emotion that brought a lump into the throat and scalding moisture to the eyes, and the

author was accused of too unsparing realism. We had not then learnt how much realism we could endure without flinching. But Daudet's literary progress was so palpable that the critics, while unanimously acknowledging it, warned him against the intoxication of an undisputed success, and pointed out the higher summits from which even incidental failures and errors can never dislodge the genius that has once reached them.

In his next long work the Southerner reappeared and elbowed the Parisian aside, although Daudet pandered to the curiosity of his fashionable readers by placing before their eyes in *Le Nabab* types so striking that they could not escape recognition. Jenkins, the English doctor, was as unmistakably meant for Sir James Oliffe, who died in Paris some four years ago, as the Duc de Mora for the brilliant, fascinating Morny of the second Empire. Jansoulet himself, the *Nabab*, so shrewd and yet so simple, so credulous and so ambitious, so prodigal of

boundless wealth, with his open hands, warm heart, and native ignorance, is a true son of the Provençal race, uniting the guilelessness of the child to the untamed passions of the savage. When he falls from the pinnacle of prosperity, when friends betray, flatterers forsake, when wife and children are ingrate, when ambition, fortune, political position are shattered, leaving him broken-hearted and bankrupt, even in his honour, he goes forth from the Chamber of Representatives where his nomination as Deputy has been annulled, and meets his old peasant mother in the lobby, frightened, troubled, and the object of jeering remarks.

“Walking up to her, he says quietly :

“‘Take my arm, mother ; we must not stop here.’

“He spoke aloud in so calm and firm a tone that the laughter ceased, and the old woman, suddenly reassured, supported by the strong arm on which she rested, quieting the last tremulousness of her despair, was able to leave the House

between two respectful rows of spectators. Grand and rustic couple, the millions of the sun illuminating the peasant mother as the golden rays surround the shrine of a saint, they disappeared in the warm sunshine, in the splendour of their dazzling carriage; ferocious irony in presence of such dire distress; striking symbol of the appalling misery of the wealthy!

“Both sitting far back, afraid of being observed, did not speak at first. But as soon as the carriage rolled on, as soon as the Calvary on which Jansoulet’s honour remained nailed to the gibbet had vanished behind him, utterly overcome, he leant his head against his mother’s shoulder, buried it in the folds of the old green shawl, and allowing a flood of burning tears to fall, his strong frame shaken with sobs, the cry of his infancy rose to his lips, the old Provençal plaint of the very little child, ‘Mama! Mama!’”

For the intelligence of these lines, let us add that Jansoulet could have victoriously cleared himself, retained his post of Deputy, and ob-

tained the suffrage of the whole House, carried away by his eloquent vindication, had he spoken the word that justified him at the expense of an elder brother, the real culprit, now a hopeless idiot; but his eyes fell suddenly on the old woman, whose presence there he had not till then suspected; he remembered that she ignored the dishonour of *l'Ainé*, and a lifetime of respect and family solidarity rose before his eyes to seal his lips.

"He fancied that he heard the old father's voice moaning, 'I am dying of shame, son.' Would *she* die of shame also if he spoke? He met the maternal smile with a sublime glance of renunciation, and in a voice from which all fire had fled, with a discouraged gesture, he continued:

"'Pardon, gentlemen, the explanation is beyond my strength. Command an inquest on my life. . . .'"

The temptation is great to retrace the charming picture of the Joyeuse home, with its "Bonne

Maman" of twenty; the last dance of the little old fairy *ballerine* Cremnitz, and many more equally fascinating scenes, but it would lead us too far. I shall only add one more extract relating to the death of the Duc de Mora:

"Man of the world—Mora was *that*, and *that* only. Sauntering through life, masked, gloved, protected by the white satin plastron worn by the fencing master in a public match, maintaining the immaculate correctness of his fighting apparel, sacrificing all to the irreproachable surface that stood him in lieu of armour, he had improvised himself a statesman in the time it took him to step from the drawing-room to a wider stage; he was undeniably a statesman of great merit, merely on account of his social qualifications, his art of listening and smiling, his comprehension of men, his scepticism and his coolness. His *sang froid* did not forsake him at the last moment.

". . . . He was the most brilliant incarnation of the Empire. What is seen from afar in a

building is not its solid or trembling base, its architectural mass, it is the gilt and delicate spire, carved like lace-work, superadded for the gratification of the eye. What France and Europe saw of the Empire was Mora. When he felt the monument would be dismantled and shorn of its elegance. And how many lives would be dragged down with him? How many fortunes totter under the concussion of this disaster?

“ In the lower hall, as quiet as the rest of the house, two lamps were burning. A lackey dozed in one corner, the *Suisse* was reading in front of the fireplace. He glanced at the new-comer over the rim of his spectacles, but said nothing, and Jansoulet did not venture to ask any questions. A rapid, sliding step, a murmured melody made him lift his eyes; he saw a white and bent old man, shrouded in laces like an altar, moving his lips in prayer as he passed with long priestly strides, his red robe trailing fan-like on the carpet behind him. It

was the Archbishop of Paris, followed by his two assistants; the vision with a breath of cold wind glided past Jansoulet, was engulfed in the heavy carriage and vanished, carrying away all hope.

“ ‘Matter of decency,’ said Monpavon, suddenly appearing at his side; ‘Mora is an Epicurean, brought up in the ideas of——thing——creature——you know who I mean——eighteenth century——but bad for the masses——in a man of his position. Ah! he is the master of us all——irreproachable form!’

“ ‘Then all is ended,’ said Jansoulet, terrified. ‘No hope?’

“ Monpavon signed him to listen. A carriage was rolling with a muffled sound on the avenue of the quay. The gong at the gates struck rapidly and repeatedly. The Marquis counted aloud: ‘One, two, three, four.’ At the fifth stroke he rose.

“ ‘No hope *now*, for *he* is here,’ he said, alluding to the superstition current in Paris that the

Sovereign's visit was always fatal to the dying. On all sides hurrying footmen threw wide open the folding-doors, and formed themselves into a double file, while the *Suisse*, his cocked hat across his brows, heralded with the sharp ring of his halberd on the flags the advent of two august figures, preceded by a valet carrying a lighted candelabra. The woman ascended the stairs, erect and proud, veiled in her black Spanish mantilla; the man, weary and pale, supported himself by the banisters; the collar of his light overcoat was raised, and his slightly bent shoulders shook with a convulsive sob.

“ Although it was very early yet, and the pink vapours of dawn were still floating on the morning air, the hotel was everywhere open as for a solemn departure. The lamps still smoked on the mantelpieces, a veil of dust trembled. His Excellency had died late the night before, but already ten thousand letters had been printed, and every hand that could hold a pen was busy directing them. Jansoulet reached the waiting-

room that used to be so crowded ; all its seats to-day were empty. In the centre, on a table, lay the hat, stick and gloves of Monsieur le Duc, ready as they always were, to spare him the necessity of calling for them if suddenly required. The things we have worn retain a little of our person. The curve of the hat recalled the curve of the moustache, the light gloves seemed to grasp the supple and solid cane, a thrill of life animated all three, as if the Duke was about to appear, to stretch out his hand, conversing still, and then pass out.

“ Ah, no ! Monsieur le Duc was not going out. Jansoulet, advancing towards the door, could see lying on the bed, raised on three steps—always in state, even after death—a haughty, rigid form, a motionless and suddenly aged profile, changed by the beard that had grown entirely grey in one night, and kneeling at the head of the couch, resting against the sloping pillows, crushed amidst the white draperies, a woman, whose golden hair unloosed was about

to fall under the shears of eternal widowhood. Beside her a priest, and a Sister of Mercy, hushed in the devotional atmosphere of mortuary vigils, in which are mingled the fatigue of sleepless nights and the mutterings of prayer and darkness.

“The room where so many ambitions had felt their wings expand, where so many hopes had vibrated and disappointments shivered, had fallen to the restfulness of passing death. Not a sound, not a sigh—only, in spite of the early hour, yonder towards the bridge of the *Concorde* the shrill and lively notes of the little flute rising above the roll of the first carriages. But its irritating raillery was to-day lost on the man sleeping there, showing the awe-struck Nabab a vision of his own fate, chill and discoloured, ready for the tomb.

“Others beside Jansoulet have seen the death chamber under an even more lugubrious aspect; its windows thrown open, wind and shadows entering freely from the garden below, with a chill current of air—a form on trestles—a body in

process of embalming—an empty head in which a sponge was stuffed, and in a large receptacle of water, the brain. The weight of that statesman's brain was extraordinary. It weighed—it weighed . . . the papers of the time gave the accurate figure, but who remembers it now?"

The *Nabab* was entitled *Mœurs Parisiennes. Les Rois en Exil*, published in 1879, bore the strange sub-title, *Novel of Modern History*. Strictly speaking, the book is, however, neither wholly historical nor wholly fiction. Some of the incidents may, it is true, by looking over a pile of old newspapers, be found to have actually happened—such, for example, as the episode of the young Princess de Rosen escaping in the garb of a *marmiton* from a restaurant where she had granted her kingly admirer a clandestine meeting, an adventure of which the real hero was the much talked of Prince of Orange, familiarly called *Citron* in Paris clubs. But who is Christian d'Illyrie in the gallery of

banished monarchs? Who is Queen Frederique, the central figure of the whole story introduced to the reader in a few short lines of the opening chapter?

“She had been sleeping since the morning. A sleep of fever and fatigue, in which her dreams were made up of all the distress of a fallen and exiled queen—a sleep even then convulsed by the thunder and anguish of a two months’ siege, stirred by bloody visions, sobs, shivers, nervous thrills, out of which a start of terror roused her.”

In the portrait of the royal couple may be traced characteristics belonging to some exiled princes, and others that never appertained to living Sovereigns. The queen is more superb in her misfortune than ever she was surrounded by the pomp and majesty of her rank. Hers is not a nature to submit and suffer patiently; she struggles and resists, combating inch by inch, trying hopelessly to infuse some of her courage and dignity into her handsome, weak,

frivolous consort, concealing his errors, and holding up the royal puppet to the people as the divine representative of monarchy. She does so not only from a deep conviction of the rights and duties of a royal mission, but to guard in its nobility and integrity the inheritance of her son—frail, sickly Prince Zara. But even that last hope fails her; after his inefficient, unprincipled father has abdicated, an accident injures the boy's sight, and when she takes him *incognito* to a celebrated oculist, she hears the child's doom and her own, from the unconscious specialist's lips. The consultation proceeds. Dr. Bouchereau has stated that with normally sound subjects the operation that will save the boy from blindness is certain to be successful.

“He called the child to him, stood him between his knees, and, to interest him during the preliminary inspection, asked with his large benevolent smile :

“ ‘ What is your name ? ’

“ ‘ Leopold, Monsieur. ’

“‘Leopold—what?’

“‘The boy glanced at his mother without answering.

“‘Well, Leopold, take off your jacket and waistcoat, so that I can examine and sound you all over.’

“The child slowly and awkwardly began to undress, assisted by his mother’s trembling hands, and by the good doctor, who was the more efficient of the three, exposing a poor little rickety body, with shoulders bending inwards like the wings of a bird folded before taking flight, and a flesh so wan that the scapulary and medals stood out like *ex votos* on plaster. The mother’s eyes dropped; she was half ashamed of her work. M. Bouchereau listened, tapped, and interrupted himself to put a few questions :

“‘The father is old—is he not?’

“‘No—barely thirty-five.’

“‘Often ill?’

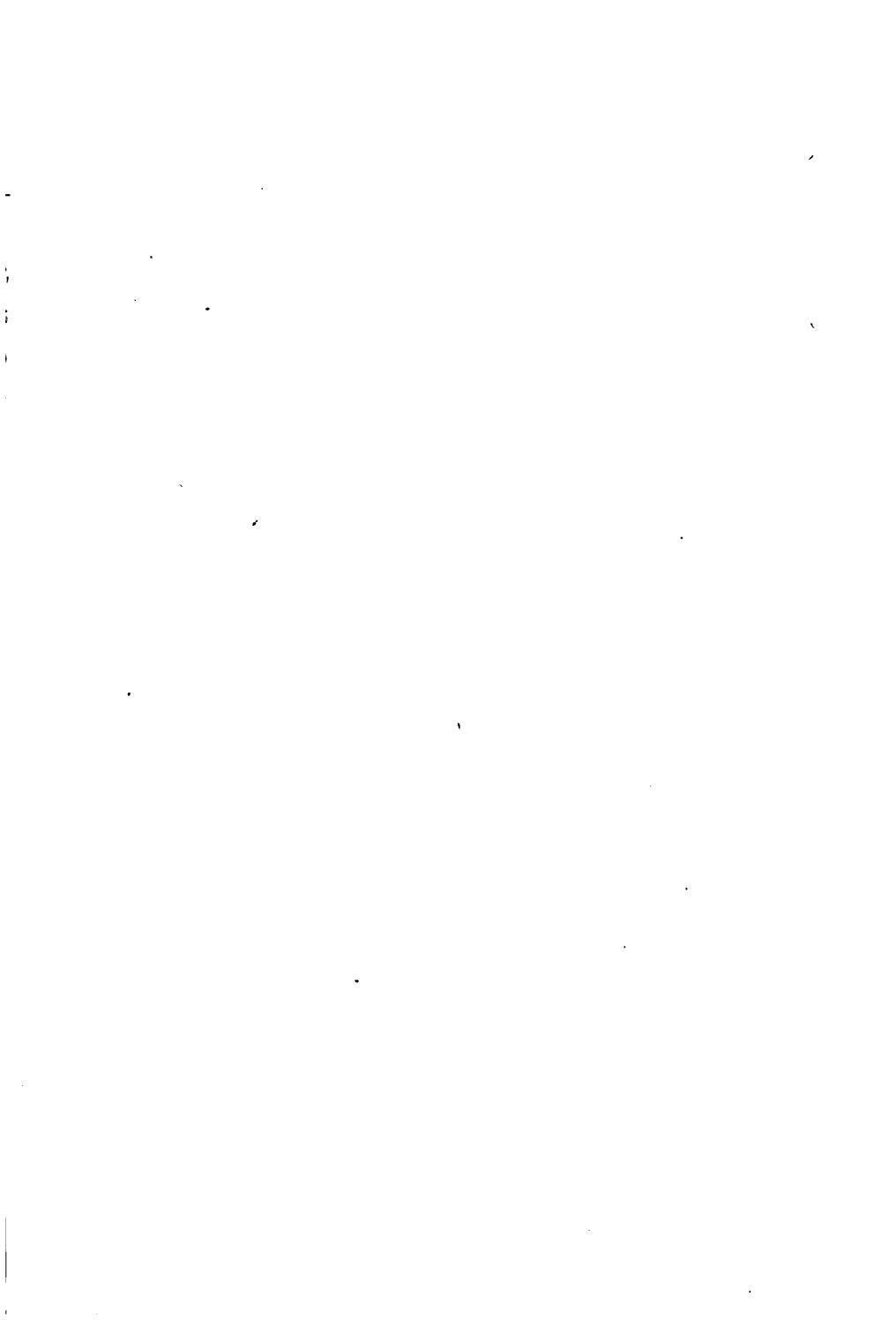
“‘No—hardly ever.’

Zy 11
V26

“ ‘Indeed! Dress yourself, my little man.’

“He sat back thoughtfully in his easy-chair, while the child, having resumed his blue velvet suit and his furs, retired, without being told to do so, to the furthest end of the study. During the last four years he had been used to so much mystery, to so many whisperings about his case, that he had ceased to feel uneasy, to attempt to understand, and was patiently passive.

END OF VOL. I.



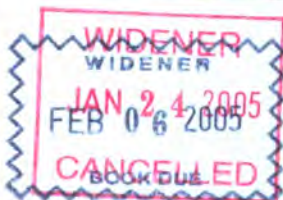




The borrower must return this item on or before the last date stamped below. If another user places a recall for this item, the borrower will be notified of the need for an earlier return.

*Non-receipt of overdue notices does **not** exempt the borrower from overdue fines.*

Harvard College Widener Library
Cambridge, MA 02138 617-495-2413



Please handle with care.
Thank you for helping to preserve
library collections at Harvard.

